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LOU LODIGENSKI



**'The amount of intrinsic value that is not measurable is probably greater in this industry than in any other.'**

**RAND COOK**

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Courtesy of  
Beautiful Day Media



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Adam Levy

COURTESY OF ADAM LEVY

**G**len Campbell, Eric Clapton, Bob Dylan, Lightnin' Hopkins, Earl Klugh, Willie Nelson, Kelly Joe Phelps, Doug Wamble, Josh White, and Neil Young. Yes, they're all well-known recording artists and guitar stylists. What else do they have in common?

Each has had his playing style deconstructed, tabbed out, and explained in straightforward, conversational English in an issue of *Acoustic Guitar* by the amazingly versatile and amiable Adam Levy. Now you can add Paul Simon to the pantheon—and explore his intricate bag of fingerstyle licks—with the portrait that begins on page 16 of this issue.

Encino, California-born Adam Levy has performance in his genes. His maternal grandfather, George Wyle, penned "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year," co-wrote the *Gilligan's Island* theme song with Sherwood Schwartz, and worked as a music director for TV megastars like Flip Wilson, Andy Williams, and John Denver. Adam earned his guitar chops

studying with two legendary teachers, Ted Greene and Jimmy Wyble, at the Dick Grove School of Music. He has put their jazz and swing sensibilities to excellent use as a soloist and notably as a sideman to some of the most subtle and sensitive vocalists around, including Norah Jones and Tracy Chapman.

Of late, Adam has been focused on helping *Acoustic Guitar* readers understand the guitar approaches of notable singer-songwriters. Stay tuned for future installments on artists like Jackson Browne, Johnny Cash, Bruce Cockburn, Shawn Colvin, Loretta Lynn, James Taylor, Richard Thompson, and Lucinda Williams. (And check out his highly regarded lesson videos at Truefire.com.)

Earlier this year, I wrote a brief portrait of my local music store, Amazing Grace Music, in this column. The piece spurred an outpouring of paeans to dozens of other independent music retailers beloved of *Acoustic Guitar* readers, many of which we shared in our Feedback department. With those vivid pictures in mind, we asked contributor Kate Koenig to scout "stores that do more"—music dealers who see themselves as much as community resources as retail outlets. Her report starts on page 36.

Finally, a reminder that *Acoustic Guitar* magazine is adopting a new bimonthly frequency, starting with the March/April 2019 issue. If you have questions about how the change impacts your subscription, please write us at [AcousticGuitarService@Stringletter.com](mailto:AcousticGuitarService@Stringletter.com). Thanks to the readers who accepted my invitation to tell us how to fill the additional 16 pages we plan to add to each bimonthly issue—it's certainly not too late to add your voice. Write me at [David.Lusterman@Stringletter.com](mailto:David.Lusterman@Stringletter.com).

## Adam Levy Lesson Features in Acoustic Guitar

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# THE UNPLUGGED EFFECT

Last November's "Front Porch" column asked readers to share their thoughts about the impact of Eric Clapton's 1992 MTV Unplugged performance. We received an overwhelming number of positive responses, including the following note from longtime Martin mainstay Dick Boak, who copied Clapton on his letter. We're delighted to share Boak's letter, and Clapton's reply, along with a few other reader responses.

Of course, I was thrilled to see the November issue that covered Eric Clapton's acoustic guitar style. You asked about his impact and I must answer that perhaps more than anyone, I was immensely impacted by his MTV *Unplugged* performance and success. When the show aired in 1992, I was the director of advertising for C. F. Martin & Co.

Eric was playing his now famous Vintage 1939 000-42, and his musical partner Andy Fairweather Low was playing another of Eric's 000s—a 000-28 modified by Mike Longworth into a 000-45 of sorts. As you know, the acoustic guitar market was struggling to emerge from the doldrums in the 1980s, perhaps diminished by the flood of Casio keyboards and the barrage of disco music. *Unplugged* changed all of that, making an acoustic set vital to concert performances by otherwise electric players. Clapton's stellar *Unplugged* performance won seven Grammys, including Album of the Year. Not surprisingly, the phones at Martin began to ring and virtually all of the calls were directed to my desk.

After about 30 or 40 calls asking what Eric was playing and where one could acquire one, I marched into C. F. "Chris" Martin's office and asked his permission to allow me to contact Eric with a proposal. Chris was open-minded and agreed, as long as the royalties from such a collaboration would go to charity.

So I contacted Eric's management office in London by fax and made my succinct proposal to create an Eric Clapton 000-42EC Signature model with proceeds going to the Eric Clapton Charitable Trust. Eric loved the idea. We brainstormed specs and ended up combining aspects from both of the guitars. There was a tremendous void of 000s in the market because Dreadnought sales had largely supplanted the smaller-bodied instruments that preceded them. The timing was perfect. We offered a run of exactly 461 000-42EC guitars at the Anaheim NAMM Show in January of 1995—the number being a clear nod to Clapton's comeback album, *461 Ocean Blvd.* The entire edition sold out to our dealer base within an hour or two in a feeding frenzy.

Chris Martin, Eric Clapton, and Dick Boak with Clapton's 000-42EC Signature model, 1995



The enormous success of this project led to the formation of Martin's Artist Relations Department with me at the helm, and collaborative projects with an amazing array of iconic guitarists: Paul Simon, Sting, Crosby Stills & Nash, Steve Miller, Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Joan Baez, Mark Knopfler, Tom Petty, John Mayer, Jorma Kaukonen, David Bromberg, Steve Howe, Marty Stuart, Merle Haggard, Norman Blake, Roger McGuinn, Andy Summers, Peter Dinklage, Nancy Wilson, Buddy Guy, Laurence Juber, and so many more; in fact more than 100 incredible projects—highly fulfilling projects with great stories and lasting friendships.

And peppered in with these projects were repeat signature guitar projects with Eric—to the best of my recollection more than 11 highly successful Clapton 000 guitar designs—all based on the original 1939 000. The result was the undeniable revitalization of the acoustic guitar market, the deserved re-popularization of the 14-fret 000, and the subsequent

market acknowledgement of the many other extremely viable smaller-bodied 12- and 14-fret Martin sizes that had fallen off of Martin's stock offerings over the decades.

So, I owe great personal gratitude to Eric Clapton, as does Martin, as does the entire acoustic guitar and music community. No single event during my 42-year career at Martin had more significance. Thank you, Eric!

—Dick Boak, Former Director of Advertising, Artist Relations; Former Director of the Museum, Archives, and Special Projects; C. F. Martin & Co., Inc., Nazareth, PA

Oh my goodness, Dick, this made me cry. I want you to know that seeing a dreadnought in the flesh, at the age of 15, I wanted to own a Martin more than anything else in the world. And seeing Big Bill Broonzy play "Hey Hey" on a 000-28 in a short film clip fueled the fire to fever pitch. Recently, when asked by a friend, "What would you take with you, if you were only allowed to keep one thing in your life?" I



## FEEDBACK

answered without hesitation: "The 000-42 that my wife gave me for X-mas." Simple as that! Dreams come true. Thank you.

—Eric Clapton, via email to Dick Boak

EC's performance on *Unplugged* rang my bell. I have always viewed acoustic guitar as the original source of rock 'n' roll, and this performance clinched it. The thing I like most about it is the way the whole band worked together. They are locked in, tight, communicating with each other. Nathan East, Steve Ferrone, Andy Fairweather Low, and Chuck Leavell for crying out loud! And Eric still sounding exactly like Eric on his Martin 000-42 right in the middle of it; no matter what the circumstances EC always sounds like his own unique self. *Unplugged* impacted me in that I felt vindicated in playing rock 'n' roll and blues on acoustic guitar.

—David Sams, via email

*Unplugged* will always remain a part of the wonderful experience I have had with the acoustic guitar, because sometimes when I make a mistake at the beginning of a song, I'll stop and shout out, "Hang on. Hang on. Hang on."—just like Clapton did at the beginning of "Alberta." Then I'll say to the audience, "Remember when Clapton did that on the *Unplugged* album? Hey, if Clapton can make a mistake, so can I." It gets a laugh every time. And then I know the audience is on my side, even if I'm not as good as Clapton.

—Joe Verga, via email

I can hardly stress the importance of this landmark, desert island disc. I have used it as a blueprint for my acoustic solo, duo, and trio gigs. The variety of musical styles on the album are so enjoyable and the intimacy of the recording really makes it special. I think every electric guitarist should have an acoustic guitar nearby.

—Martin Kelly, via email

As a guy whose guitars languished in the closet for most of the '80s, I got a kick out of your "riding the wave" comment in the November Front Porch. When I brought *Unplugged* home, I found myself surrounded by instruments and cases with headphones firmly in place. I absolutely had to play along. Twenty-six years later, I'm still strumming. Thanks, Slowhand.

—Dave Hanley, via email

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**Bluegrass Week - June 16-22: Flatpicking:** Dan Crary, Mark Cosgrove, Beppe Gambetta,  
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**Mandolin:** David Benedict, Andrew Collins, Tim Connell, Bruce Graybill, Andy Hatfield, Jordan Ramsey; **Bluegrass Fiddle:** Bronwyn Keith-Hynes, Kenny Kosek, Nate Lee;

**Bluegrass Banjo:** BB Bowness, John Carlini, Gary Davis, Alan Munde; **Songwriting:** Donna Ulisse; **Bass:** Steve Roy, Nate Sabat; **Bluegrass Singing:** Dale Ann Bradley, Don Rigsby;

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## Keep Feeling Fascination

Martin Simpson continues to draw inspiration from instruments of all kinds

BY GLENN KIMPTON

Having lived and performed in the United States for 15 years, British guitarist Martin Simpson's playing is a well-steeped blend of American blues, old-time music, and traditional English folk material. Simpson is currently at the very height of his powers, having released a string of pretty-perfect albums, with last year's *Trails and Tribulations* following on from the sparer and solo *Vagrant Stanzas* from 2013. He is also without doubt the most excitable musician I know when it comes to instruments, guitars in particular; there's always something getting his creative juices flowing and spurring him on to write more songs and make more music. Exactly a year after *Tribulations* dropped,

Simpson is back in the studio, looking to continue his prolific run of exceptional albums—there's certainly no sign of a block anytime soon.

"It's funny," he smiles. "I have these moments when I think, 'Oh my god! How am I going to do this?' but then, I went into the studio yesterday with [producer] Andy Bell and at the end of the day we looked and saw we had 29 pieces of music recorded. So it's good. I'm doing a lot of writing and a lot of experimenting, too. In addition to acoustic guitars and banjos, I'm using a lot of electric instruments. I just got a really sweet 1956 Gretsch Streamliner semi-acoustic, which is basically built on the same body as the 6120,

the most collectable Chet Atkins guitar. This is pretty much the same guitar without the name on it—and it costs about seven-grand less. It's got DeArmond pickups and flat-wound strings, and almost sounds like another instrument through a decent amp and a few effects. What I tend to look for is something that just astonishes me, really."

**What about the acoustics you've picked up recently?**

Well, I do consider myself to be one of the luckiest people on the planet. I have a wonderful relationship with PRS, who called me up more than ten years ago now and asked



if I'd like to help develop a line of acoustics. I remember saying, "It sounds great, who else is going to be involved?" and was really delighted when they said Tony McManus and Ricky Skaggs, who are seriously devoted acoustic players. So I have a Signature model and they've just brought out a new prototype, which is amazing. They've sent me one to try and it's excellent; they're great guitars, but I've still never stopped looking. I know some people who regard the guitar as their tool and they're slightly indifferent to the charms of the instrument in some ways. But I'm not like that at all. I absolutely *love* guitars and am fascinated by what they do, all the different ones. I've just had another guitar built by Stefan Sobell, who I've worked with since about 1982, and it's just extraordinary. He's building the best instruments he's ever made. In terms of sound, it's wildly different from the PRS; they really are like chalk and cheese, which is what you want.

#### **You've worked with many different builders over the years.**

When I was in the States, I would encounter a lot of really amazing vintage guitars, but seldom anything that absolutely blew my head off. I just really got on with the Sobells and various others, mainly because I really liked working with the makers. I found it fascinating to do that, but since I've been in England I've actually found a couple of vintage American guitars...

#### **Like your 1931 Martin 000-18?**

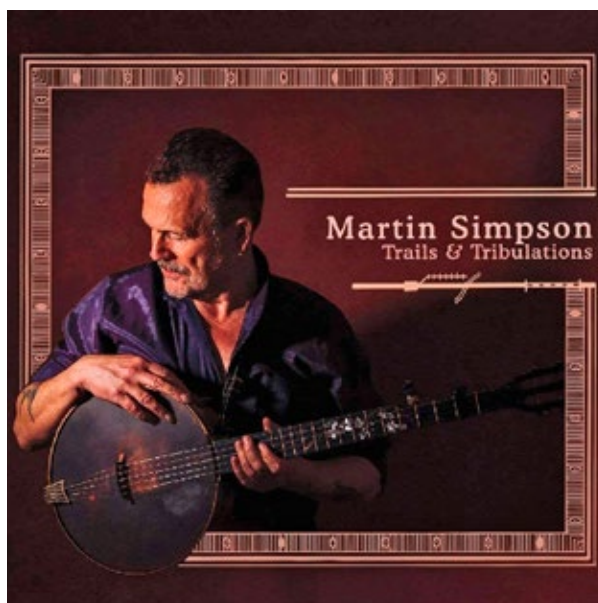
I've just been recording with the 000-18 and it's simply monstrous! It's a very interesting guitar for me—I spoke to Stefan Grossman about this, actually—because it was actually one of the last 12-fret 000s made for import to England. It was made in 1931 and brought here in 1932 and it's been here ever since, which means it hasn't been subjected to the extremes of the North American climate. It honestly looks like it was made in the '70s; it's so beautiful.

I also recently got a really odd one. A friend of mine, Gavin Davenport, got in touch and told me someone was selling an old Washburn parlor guitar and wondered if I knew someone who would want it. So this guy brought the guitar to me at a gig in Liverpool, and I opened the case and played it and it just blew my socks off. It's a funny one because Gavin bought it in pieces and gave it to a builder, who completely took it to bits. He took the ladder braces off and X-braced

it, flattened the top out, which took about a year, and put carbon fiber rods in the neck and stuck a new fingerboard and bridge on it. This guitar is tiny, probably size five, but it's a complete beast and records incredibly well; I've just recorded an old Blind Willie McTell slide tune on it and I cannot believe how great it sounds. It's a totally inspiring thing and I love it when you get that from all of these different places.

#### **Do you have your go-to instruments for the studio?**

Well, I came back from there last night and it took me quite a bit of time to unload the gear into the house [laughs]. I took two PRS guitars, a Sobell, the 000-18. I didn't take the Washburn this time because I used it in the last session,



but I did take a Sobell banjola, which is a five-string banjo neck on a mandola body. It has a great pickup in it and I really like running it through a pedalboard into a Fender Princeton—you get this beautiful, really astonishing sound. I also took my Fylde resonator to use on a particular track, but decided it wasn't the sound I wanted to hear, so I used one of the PRSs, which has a 1950s DeArmond soundhole pickup in it. I really like those things and figured, if it's good enough for Lightnin' Hopkins, it's probably all right.

#### **Do you slim down the gear for when you're on the road?**

I'm mainly using a PRS with medium-gauge strings and a Sobell with light strings, along with my J. Romero "Birthday" banjo [laughs]. Their instruments are just wonderful and

they are fabulous people. I remember seeing their banjos, god knows how many years ago in the Music Emporium in Massachusetts, and thinking they were the most amazing looking instruments, and then I played one and went, "Oh, my god, I need to have one!" Everything about this banjo, the way it feels and sits on my knee, is just utterly right and full of love. So, the one I play on stage I bought myself for my 60th birthday, but I just got another one from a guy in Sheffield and it's also excellent—it has a goat-skin head, so it has a really different sound. For the road instrument I had a plastic head put on it for changes in the weather, but I think I was being slightly over-cautious, to be honest.

#### **Do you approach banjo playing like you do guitar? I know the tunings you use are similar for both.**

I have always really just used the banjo as a way of informing my guitar playing. I got a guitar in standard tuning first, but within a couple of years I had started using open G and open D and then the world of banjo tunings just blew me away. I remember first tuning the second string up to C so it's like DADGAD except in G, and then you've got double-C tuning, which is one Nic Jones famously used for "Canadee-I-O," and that's a banjo tuning, too. Every time I think I've come up with something clever, I've always looked back and found out it's actually a banjo tuning. It's not just the C tunings either. A lot of D tunings are from the banjo, too; you'll find the D-G-A-D of DADGAD on the five-string banjo with various different fifth strings, like F# or A. I remember coming

up with a Dsus4/7 tuning, DADGAC, which I've always referred to as "Klingon Tuning," because it sounds like a Klingon, and I thought that was really clever and nobody had done it before, but of course they had, on the banjo.

#### **It's an interesting and complex world to become involved with.**

Well, I understand these tunings from a point of view of the intervals each one involves, so it ends up becoming quite simple and most of them relate back to standard tuning in some way. But, the alternate tunings just become part of your *modus operandi*, and when people tell me that it's so complicated, I *always* say that it's really not, it's actually a lot simpler than playing in standard tuning most of the time. That's not talking it down at all, it's just true that open tunings are very clear. **AC**

# C. F. Martin & Co. Recognized for Environmental Efforts

**A prestigious certification recognizes the company's dedication to its workforce, community, and the environment**

**BY ADAM PERLMUTTER**

**O**n September 1 of last year, C. F. Martin & Company became the first player in the musical instrument industry to receive a respected certification that it meets standards set for how a company treats its employees, the community, and the environment.

The certification was provided by B Lab, a non-profit founded in October 2006 by three longtime friends—Jay Coen Gilbert, Bart Houlahan, and Andrew Kassoy—who left their work as successful entrepreneurs and investors to focus on using business as a force for good. B Lab has since bestowed its B Corporation status on over 2,500 companies around the world that meet its standards for accountability, sustainability, and transparency, including ice cream-maker Ben & Jerry's, outdoor clothing and gear maker Patagonia, and crowd-funding platform Kickstarter.

B Corp certification was a natural fit for Martin Guitars, which has for decades focused on reducing its carbon footprint while taking good care of its employees and the surrounding community. Martin recently made a major change to its facilities that resulted in a dramatic decrease in energy consumption. Since 1964, the Nazareth, Pennsylvania-based company had relied on a series of rooftop air conditioners, which proved inefficient as units aged and the company grew. "It became so difficult to convince these units, jury-rigged and cobbled together as they were, to climate-control a large guitar factory—something they weren't really designed to do," says Martin's chairman and CEO, Chris Martin. "Finally, we looked into a chiller plant"—replacing the factory's HVAC systems with a state-of-the-art central hot/chilled water plant—"which sounded great until we saw the price, and the folks in accounting were like, 'It's gonna cost *how* much?'"

After rigorous financial analysis, Martin determined that the \$8.9 million price tag for the chiller plant would be a good long-term investment. But when the company flicked on the switch for the new climate-control solution in November 2016, it substantially exceeded its projected decrease in electrical and natural gas consumption and is now seeing a \$500,000 annual decrease in annual energy costs. This helped Martin receive the B Corp status, and also the



A rooftop view of Martin's new chiller plant, which has dramatically reduced the company's energy and natural gas consumption.

COURTESY OF C. F. MARTIN & CO.

recognition of the U.S. Department of Energy, as part of the DOE's Better Plants challenge—not to mention a \$317,000 rebate from their electricity vendor. "You would think an electrical company would be in favor of just the opposite," Martin says. "But they realize that they also have to be part of the concern about using too much energy."

Martin Guitars has taken a number of other steps with respect to protecting the environment, including the establishment of the Martin Guitar Charitable Foundation, which since 1997 has supported environmental action organizations, as well as non-profit music and arts education groups. With the introduction of the D Mahogany guitar in 2009, Martin Guitars became one of the first companies to make an instrument built entirely of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified woods, and it has also established responsible purchasing practices for all tonewoods, while using carbon-neutral shipment for all of its instruments.

The company has also taken a hard look at other ways to minimize its impact, resulting in everything from comprehensive LED lighting

upgrades throughout its U.S. facilities, to heat-rejecting white roofs at the Nazareth headquarters, to clear roof panels at the warehouse of its factory in Navojoa, Sonora, Mexico, reducing the need for electric lighting during daylight hours.

Martin Guitars has long been known for the fair and ethical ways it treats its workers, with generous retirement and benefit plans, and for community outreach—all factors contributing to the certification. In Navojoa, Martin has given monetary support to two orphanages, one for boys and the other for girls, and it has purchased and donated equipment to the area's fire department.

In the end, Martin sees the B Corporation certification as good recognition for the practices and values that it has always promoted—which consumers, particularly of the millennial generation and younger, will respond favorably to. Chris Martin says, "Our partnership with B Lab and the community of Certified B Corporations will make us a better business in a very holistic way."

**AC**



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# ***Moods & Melodies***

INSIDE PAUL SIMON'S ATMOSPHERIC  
ACOUSTIC GUITAR STYLE

BY ADAM LEVY







**W**hether you think of Paul Simon as the guitar-playing, songwriting half of the duo Simon & Garfunkel or as a solo artist with world-music leanings may depend on your age. Both characterizations are true—if vastly oversimplified. Simon is a songwriter and guitarist who has made many iconic records—with Art Garfunkel and without—and has composed some of the most beloved songs of the 20th century. Along the way, he's experimented with all sorts of musical styles and recording techniques—and guitars.

Simon is known to be particular about the instruments he plays and is a bit of a six-string connoisseur. When the Metropolitan Museum of Art presented the exhibit *Guitar Heroes: Legendary Craftsmen from Italy to New York*, in 2011, Simon lent his 1975 D'Aquisto New Yorker Special oval-hole archtop to display. He has played several Martin models over the years—including a D-12-28, D-35S, and OM-42PS signature model. He has also favored an early 1970s SB3 built by luthier Michael Gurian, as well as assorted Guilds and Yamahas.

**If you're a creative player or writer, it behooves you to develop Simon's ideas further and make them your own.**

What's been consistent throughout Simon's long career is that he's always pushed himself to explore the guitar beyond typical folk and folk-rock styles. "So Long, Frank Lloyd Wright" (from Simon & Garfunkel's 1970 album, *Bridge Over Troubled Water*) bears an obvious bossa-nova influence. "Something So Right" (from Simon's 1973 solo record, *There Goes Rhymin' Simon*) is peppered with jazz-tinged passing chords. "American Tune" (from the same album) was partially inspired by a J. S. Bach melody. Simon explored South African musical styles on his 1986 *Graceland* album and Brazilian and Cameroonian rhythms on *Rhythm of the Saints* (from 1990). On the albums that followed—including *You're the One* and *Surprise*—Simon continued to use rhythm as a prime source of inspiration.

Simon's latest album—*Into the Blue Light*, released last September—features new recordings of ten songs spanning his solo career. Each song's arrangement has been completely overhauled. Many are orchestrated with no guitar at all, or with guitars played by other fine players—including Sérgio and Odair Assad, Bill Frisell, Mark Stewart, and the late Cameroonian guitarist Vincent Nguini, who worked with Simon since the late '80s. Simon recently announced



his retirement from touring, so his summer 2018 outing—*Homeward Bound: The Farewell Tour*—was (supposedly) his last. It remains to be seen whether he will continue to record.

In this lesson, you'll study a trove of examples inspired by Simon's sophisticated, evocative acoustic-guitar work—with Garfunkel and on his own.

### DEFT FINGERPICKING AND CREATIVE CHORDING

**Example 1** is in the style of the intro section to "Kathy's Song" from Simon & Garfunkel's *Sounds of Silence*, released at the beginning of 1966. (A solo performance of this song appeared on Simon's 1965 debut, *The Paul Simon Songbook*. The *Sounds of Silence* recording is the reference point here.) To match the recording, tune each of your strings down a half step.

Though this song is in the key of G major, the moody opening measures suggest a darker atmosphere via an incomplete Em(add9) chord. As with all of the examples in this lesson, play the down-stemmed notes with your thumb and the up-stemmed notes with your fingers. While the first four measures are simple enough, there's a move in bars 5 and 7 that requires

some extra attention to get just right—because your hands will be moving somewhat independently. After hammering into the C/G chord on the *and* of beat 2, pluck the lone C note on the *and* of beat 3 and the E on beat 4. Finally, pull off both strings 2 and 4 on the *and* of beat 4. That last bit is the tricky part, as you're essentially plucking just one note (the E) then immediately pulling off two (E and C).

The lovely "April Come She Will"—also from *Sounds of Silence*—is another example of Simon's deft fingerpicking and creative chording. **Example 2** is based on the intro to this song. (As with "Kathy's Song," an alternate version of "April Come She Will" appeared on *The Paul Simon Songbook*. *Sounds of Silence* is our benchmark here as well.) Before playing Ex. 2, return your guitar to standard tuning and place a capo at the first fret.

What's notable in this example is Simon's use of high-position triads on the treble strings in lieu of standard open chords. The G/D chord in measures 1, 3, and 5 is fingered like a familiar D major chord but becomes G/D when played at the seventh fret. Simon gets some melodic variety in measures 2, 4, and 6 by lifting his second finger off of the first





### Example 1

Tune down 1/2 step

♩ = 100

E<sub>m</sub>(add9)

let ring throughout

### Example 2

Capo I

♩ = 102

### Example 3

Capo VII

♩ = 130

string. (The open E turns the chord from G/D to G6/D.) In measure 7, you'll briefly play a D triad at fifth fret, followed by open third and fourth strings. While that third-string note (G) isn't part of a D chord, it's harmonious enough and allows time for a quick shift down to open position for the four measures that follow.

### ENTERING WORLDLY TERRITORY

Following the commercial success of *Sounds of Silence*, Simon & Garfunkel released another LP—*Parsley, Sage, Rosemary, and Thyme*—before the end of 1966. The arpeggiated guitar figure in **Example 3** is similar to the mesmeric opening measures of “Scarborough Fair/Canticle” from *Parsley, Sage, Rosemary, and Thyme*. The song is in the key of E minor. To match the original recording, capo your guitar at the seventh fret and play shapes in the proximity of an Am7 chord—though never land directly on it.

Simon's fingerpicking pattern here is pretty unusual. If you watch some of his live performances of this song on YouTube, you may notice that he doesn't seem to use his middle finger, opting instead for his thumb (for the down-stemmed notes in this example) in conjunction with his index and ring fingers (up-stemmed notes).



Simon & Garfunkel's final studio recording, *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, was released in 1970. It demonstrates that Simon was moving beyond folk and folk-rock into more adventurous, worldly territory. “El Condor Pasa,” for example, is based on a traditional Peruvian song. The album's title track is influenced by gospel music. “So Long, Frank Lloyd Wright,” played on nylon-string guitar, has a bossa-nova feel—with undulating rhythms and jazzy chords. **Example 4a** is modeled on the verse sections of that tune. If you'd like to

match Simon & Garfunkel's recording, tune down a half step. Note that the guitar part is more melodically active in measures 4, 7, and 8. This is because the vocal melody is relatively inactive in those places. That's a great lesson to remember.

**Example 4b** echoes the tangy chords Simon plays at the end of the song's second verse—juxtaposing a fretted D# against an open E on the C major chord, then similarly playing a fretted A# against an open B on the G major chord. Measure 4 has a similar dissonance, though it's achieved in a slightly different way. In measures 1 and 2, the fretted note is the chord's #2, while the open string is the chord's major 3. Here, however, the #2 (B) is open and the 3 (C) is fretted.

### JAZZ-TINGED HARMONIES AND MORE

The remaining examples in this lesson are drawn from Simon's post-S&G career. In these, you'll see how he has continued to grow as a guitarist and as a composer—with the use of even more colorful harmonies and guitar techniques that definitely don't come from the folk-guitar tradition.

The first solo Simon song you'll look at is “Something So Right,” from his eclectic 1973 release, *There Goes Rhymin' Simon*. To play



## AN UNERRING SENSE OF BALANCE

Longtime sideman Mark Stewart describes his adventures with Paul Simon

**M**ark Stewart has been central to Paul Simon's recording and touring projects for the past 20 years, adding color and depth with his guitar parts and on several other instruments, as well. In

between Simon projects, Stewart keeps busy with all sorts of other interesting endeavors. He teaches instrument design at MIT and plays guitar with the cutting-edge Bang on a Can All-Stars ensemble. He has curated the current Gunnar Schonbeck *No Experience Required* instrument exhibit at Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art and is the Artistic Director of Guitar Mash—a non-profit organization that supports music education and communal creativity. —AL

**What are some of the instruments you play onstage with Simon?**

A 1967 Fender Telecaster, '67 Gibson ES-335, '68 goldtop Gibson Les Paul, '67 Gibson SG Junior, '65 Danelectro 4021, Bruce Petros acoustic, Fender electric mandolin, Nakamura cello, Conn baritone sax, Maui Xaphoon [a saxophone/recorder hybrid], penny whistle, and Trombadoo—a slide-didgeridoo instrument that I built. Mine is easily made with two dollars' worth of materials, tops, and has a huge sound. I think it can be heard on *Old Friends: Live on Stage*—concert recordings

from Simon & Garfunkel's 2003 reunion tour. I've also used it on a few of Paul's records, doing drones in nifty spots.

**Do you have a favorite Simon song to play live?**

It's like choosing a favorite food. Impossible to say. So many!

**Is there one that's most challenging?**

There are different challenges from different time periods of his compositional output. The songs that have a beautiful fragility take special care. “Hearts and Bones” [from Simon's 1983 album of the same name] and “Dazzling Blue” [from Simon's 2011 album *So Beautiful or So What*] come to mind.

**In all the years you've played with Simon, what has struck you most about his musicality?**

He is a singular and superb bandleader and arranger, with an unerring sense of balance. As a bandleader, Wynton Marsalis has compared Paul to Duke Ellington. I concur.





### Example 4a

Tune down 1/2 step

♩ = 110

Chords: E<sup>maj7</sup>, E<sup>7/B</sup>, C<sup>9</sup>, D, G<sup>6</sup>

Tablature for measures 1-5:

Measure	1	2	3	4	5
Treble	4 4 4	3 3 3	0 2	3 3	0 0 0 0
Bass	4 4 4	1 1 1	3 2	3 2	0 0 0 0
Bass	2 2 2	2 2 2	3 0	3 0	3

Chords: F<sup>#m7</sup>, B<sup>7b9</sup>, E<sup>m</sup>, G<sup>7</sup>, C<sup>maj7</sup>

Tablature for measures 6-10:

Measure	6	7	8	9	10
Treble	2 2 2	0 3 0	0 0 0	0 0 0	0 0 0
Bass	2 2 2	0 0 0	2 0 0	2 0 0	2 0 0
Bass	2 2 2	2 3	3 2 3	3 2 3	3 2 3

### Example 4b

Chords: C, G, A<sup>m</sup>, A<sup>b</sup>

Tablature for measures 1-4:

Measure	1	2	3	4
Treble	4 0 0	3 0 0	1 1 1	5 0 5
Bass	3 3 3	3 3 3	2 2 2	4 4 4
Bass	3 3 3	3 3 3	0 0 0	4 4 4

### Example 5

Tune up 1/2 step

♩ = 74

Chords: G, G<sup>7</sup>, E<sup>sus4</sup>, E<sup>maj7</sup>, E<sup>13sus4</sup>, E<sup>7</sup>

Tablature for measures 1-6:

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
Treble	0 0 0	0 0 0	9 10 9	7 9	7 1 3	7
Bass	0 0 0	0 0 0	9 8	7 7	7 7	0
Bass	3 3 3	3 3 3	0	0 0	0 0	0

Chords: A<sup>6</sup>, A, A<sup>m6</sup>, C<sup>#7#9/G#</sup>, F<sup>#m7</sup>, G<sup>#m7</sup>, C<sup>#m7</sup>, A<sup>maj7/C#</sup>, B

Tablature for measures 7-11:

Measure	7	8	9	10	11
Treble	7 5	5 5	2 4	5 9 10	7 7
Bass	6 7	5 4	2 4	4 6 8	7 7
Bass	5 5	5 4	2 4	4 6 8	7 7

**Example 5**, which is in the style of Simon's recorded intro to this song, tune your guitar up a half step. Alternatively, you could capo at the first fret. (It's unknown whether Simon tuned up or used a capo on his original studio recording. When he performed "Something So Right" on *The Paul Simon Special* in 1977, he used no capo, so his nylon-string guitar must've been tuned up. If you can find this performance on YouTube, or elsewhere, it's a worthwhile watch.)

In measure 1, the chord shape is transformed from Esus4 to Emaj7, simply by moving the fretted notes down one fret each. Try playing these note pairs with fingers 2 and 4, as Simon apparently does. Use a barre across strings 1 through 4 to efficiently grab the E13sus4 in measure 2, adding your fourth finger for the high C#. Play the E7 in open position, using your fourth finger for the note D (measure 2, "and" of beat 3). From there, slide the D up to F# ("and" of beat 4). Then you'll already have your fourth finger on F# in preparation for the A6 in measure 3. Both A6 and A are to be played as full barre chords.

The next two measures are straightforward, technique wise, though the jazz-tinged harmony is fairly sophisticated. In the final measure, you've got to quickly get your fourth finger from G# to A on the *and* of beat 2. This may take some extra practice, if your fourth finger is not particularly agile. The final B chord is played as a full barre.

**Example 6a** is inspired by the verses of "The Late Great Johnny Ace," a haunting song

from Simon's 1983 record *Hearts and Bones*. You've already tuned your guitar up and down by a half step in this lesson. For this song, drop down a whole step from standard tuning. Though the tune is in the key of D major, the first three measures vacillate between Bbmaj7 and E—two chords that have little to do with the key of the song, or with each other. The effect of these remote harmonies is appropriately unsettling. (The lyrics of the song refer-

### What's been consistent throughout Simon's long career is that he's always pushed himself to explore the guitar beyond typical folk and folk-rock styles.

ence John Lennon and John F. Kennedy, who were both murdered, as well as the R&B singer Johnny Ace, who accidentally shot himself.)

Though the verses of "The Late Great Johnny Ace" are played freely, with no fixed tempo, the bridge section settles into a steady-rolling shuffle—as seen in **Example 6b**. The trick throughout most of this example is that the bass notes (played with your thumb) are played on offbeats, while the two-note chord shapes land squarely on beats 1–4. If you haven't been tapping your foot in time as you practice these examples, now would be a good

time to start! A physical sense of the downbeats may help you keep the chords where they belong, even though the bass is syncopated.

This lesson's final two examples are back in standard tuning and are inspired by the song "Questions for the Angels," from Simon's 2011 release, *So Beautiful or So What*. Though there's no fixed tempo in either example, make sure to keep things moving. This song is meant to lilt.

**Example 7a** is akin to the song's verses, which employ a Dmaj7 shape rooted on the fifth string at the fifth fret. On the final beat of each of the first four measures, the note B gives the chord more harmonic depth and some melodic energy as well. **Example 7b** is like the song's chorus. Here, the harmony drifts further from the tonal center (D major) and the meter alternates between 2/4 and 3/4. The effect is dreamy, as is surely Simon's intent. Play the Cm7 (measure 1) as a half-barre across strings 1–4. The rest of this example is in open position. Not all of these chord shapes may be immediately familiar to you, but they're not hard to play.

Now that you've had an opportunity to play some Paul Simon-inspired passages, you should have a greater appreciation of his depth as a composer and as a guitarist. If you simply learn to play these examples note for note, you'll have some intriguing new moves under your fingers. If you're a creative player or writer, it behooves you to develop Simon's ideas further and make them your own. He keeps growing—and you can, too.

AC

#### Example 6a

Tune down 1 step

Example 6a musical notation showing guitar chords and fingerings for measures 1 through 8. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The chords are: Bbmaj7, E, Bbmaj7, E, Bbmaj7, E, Amaj7, A7, D, G, D, D9, G, C9, B7#9. The fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 on the strings.





### Example 6b

♩ = 100    ♪ = ♩<sup>3</sup> ♩

D/A G/A D/A G6/A

D/A G6/A Dm/A Gm/A Bm/A C/A C#/A G#dim7 Gm7 A7b9

### Example 7a

Dmaj7 *play four times* Gmaj7 Aadd9 Dmaj7

### Example 7b

Cm7 G Eb/Bb

Bb6 G Eb/Bb G/B

# THE SQUA

JOSH ROSENTHAL OF TOMPKINS SQUARE RECORDS ON THE



“**A** solo acoustic guitar is—when it’s played right or, rather, when it’s played a certain way that reaches me—the most expressive instrument in the world,” Josh Rosenthal tells me on a pleasant October Tuesday.

We’re sitting outside at the Battery, a club in San Francisco’s Financial District, where Rosenthal sometimes works when he feels compelled to escape the confines of his nearby home office. “I’ve been thinking about opening a record shop in Gold Country [in Northern California], which would be the perfect spot. But that would never work—because I hate people,” Rosenthal says, laughing at the irony of his working in the Battery to escape isolation.

As the owner of the multiple-Grammy-winning Tompkins Square Records, the boutique label he founded in 2005, Rosenthal champions underdog and idiosyncratic musicians, a good number of them working in his preferred setting of solo guitar. Through his imprint—whose small but extraordinary catalog now includes about 130 full-length titles, half of them archival—

Rosenthal has done much to contribute to the renaissance of fingerstyle guitar and vinyl albums in recent years, bringing to light the work of John Fahey contemporaries like Max Ochs and fresh voices like Gwenifer Raymond.

On the Battery’s patio, obviously well-heeled people sit gazing into their electronic screens, some of them wearing headsets and teleconferencing, and at least one enjoying a surreptitious afternoon palliative. Rosenthal is dressed casually but sharply in an untucked blue button-front shirt. He is a kinetic presence as he talks animatedly about his work and his fondness for the acoustic guitar, all the while jotting down ideas that come to him on an old-school lined notepad.

## LONG ISLAND SOUNDS

Still youthful at 51, Rosenthal grew up in the 1970s and ’80s in Syosset, Long Island, not far from New York City. He credits his life in music—and his archival inclinations—to time spent as the program director of his high school radio station, WKWZ. “Radio was really a

cutting-edge medium in a way that it’s not today,” Rosenthal says. “And it was incredible to be at that age—you know, 15, 16—and have access to so much music, when you didn’t have it at all at your fingertips like you do now.”

With his friend and fellow disc jockey Judd Apatow—the future comic, producer, and writer—Rosenthal used media credentials to his advantage. “Even though the radio station was only ten watts, we pretended to be big shots, and we would get backstage passes to clubs. I would interview bands like R.E.M. before they were signed to the majors, and Judd would interview all these incredible comics, like Henny Youngman and Jerry Seinfeld. He’s still got it all on tape,” Rosenthal says.

At 16, Rosenthal scored an internship at Polygram Records, taking the train into the city after school once or twice a week to work for a few hours. “You’re talking the mid-’80s, which was such a crazy time in New York. My parents let me go alone to the city, despite all the crazy, coked-out guys who were walking around,” Rosenthal says. “It was an amazing time.



# ARE DEAL

THE PRIMACY OF THE ACOUSTIC GUITAR | BY ADAM PERLMUTTER



Josh Rosenthal

During my first year there, we put out three Van Morrison records, and all the Velvet Underground stuff got reissued for the first time.”

After also interning at *CMJ New Music Monthly*, where he learned the editorial ropes and wrote album reviews, Rosenthal attended SUNY Albany. In his senior year, he served as the musical director of the campus radio station, WCDB, and this set him up for high-level work in the music industry. When Elvis Costello came through town in 1989 to support his album *Spike*, Rosenthal reached out to a record label representative to ask if the singer-songwriter would appear on his radio show. The request was denied, but Rosenthal, undeterred, found out where Costello was staying and delivered a collection of cassette tapes and a handwritten invitation to his hotel.

“He called me at the station to accept, and then I had a stretch limousine pick him up,” Rosenthal said. “We spent a very fun hour on the radio, and later—probably because of the chutzpah I’d demonstrated in going around him

**“I loved those old Max Ochs and Harry Taussig recordings so much, and I got to wondering: Who are these guys who haven’t recorded in decades? Where are they now—and what’s their story?”**

to get Elvis on my show—the record label rep who had said no actually hired me at Columbia. I took the gig, even though I’d already accepted a job at A&M Records in Los Angeles.”

Starting at Columbia in 1989 as a manager in alternative radio promotion and ending in 2005 as a vice-president of marketing and sales at parent company Sony Music,

Rosenthal was at the company during a golden era of sorts. He worked on projects like *Robert Johnson: The Complete Recordings*, which sold more than 500,000 copies, the first archival set of its kind to go gold, drawing many new listeners into Johnson’s shadowy music and to country-blues guitar in general.

“Kate Bush, the Psychedelic Furs, Bob Dylan, the Robert Johnson box set, Public Enemy, all the Def Jam stuff—that whole run was amazing,” Rosenthal says. “I was also able to do a lot of stuff with jazz, and that’s where I kind of got a taste for the whole reissue thing. So then, I started Tompkins Square nine or ten months after I left Sony—the absolute bottom of the industry, when things had gotten very corporate—and, admittedly, not the smartest time to start a label.”

## DETECTIVE WORK

Unsure of what to do next, Rosenthal started what he assumed would be a one-off private project—a compilation of obscure solo recordings by guitarists whose work he admired. Rosenthal says, “I loved those old [solo acoustic]

Max Ochs and Harry Taussig recordings so much, and I got to wondering: Who are these guys who haven't recorded in decades? Where are they now—and what's their story?"

Answering these questions took considerable effort on Rosenthal's part; in the mid-2000s, far fewer musicians had online presences, and the Google searches he tried led him nowhere. But Rosenthal did eventually track down Ochs and Taussig—the latter by noticing that his 1965 album, *Fate Is Only Once*, was recorded in Costa Mesa, California, where the guitarist still lived—and both were delighted to be rediscovered. "They were so cool," Rosenthal says. "I recorded Max playing his tune 'Imaginational Anthem' and then found out he had previously recorded it for [record collector] Joe Bussard's Fonotone [the last 78-rpm record label, which he ran from 1956–1970]. We found the original version, from 1969, and I was able to put it on my first album, along with the new version. So Max is like the godfather of the label."

That compilation—*Imaginational Anthem* (2005)—offered a neat prototype of what the Tompkins Square label would be all about. The album combined archival recordings alongside new works by young players like Kaki King, whom Rosenthal had signed when he worked at Sony. Rosenthal says, "The concept was—and is—to combine the old and the new. I actually



had no intention of doing anything with that record, other than enjoying it for my own pleasure. But a guy I knew from Sony—Tom Overby, who wound up marrying Lucinda Williams and being her manager—was working for this indie distribution company, and he convinced me to meet with him and sign the distribution deal that I've now had for 13 years.

"So that was just really lucky to have that deal fall into my lap," Rosenthal continues. "And my luck was compounded by the fact that the album immediately got featured on NPR's *Weekend Edition Saturday*. At that point, back in 2005, if you were on NPR, you'd immediately sell thousands of records."

## CONNECTING THE DOTS

As the sole proprietor of Tompkins Square Records, which he named after the colorful public park near his old apartment in downtown New York City, Rosenthal has never had any full-time employees. The label has always been, more or less, a reflection of his personal listening habits and preoccupations, a record of the dots he's connected between music and musicians over the last four decades.

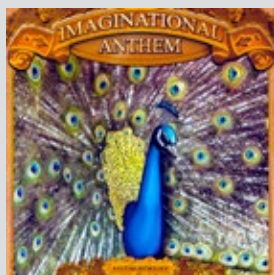
"My first taste of it was when I was a teenager and heard Jimmy Page playing 'Black Mountain Side,' on the first Led Zeppelin album," he says. "Then I read about how much [Page] liked Bert Jansch, and that opened up a window into the acoustic world. There used to be this bookstore on Long Island—talk about what a dinosaur I am!—where I would order John Fahey cassettes and things like that. So that's really where all this started."

In connecting the dots, Rosenthal has gravitated toward the obscure and the uncanny, often rediscovering unknowns, like Rick Deitrick, who privately released his own work in the 1970s. "Literally no one knew who Rick was before *Imagination Anthem* came out," Rosenthal says, referring to the eighth volume of this compilation series, featuring the track "Missy Christa," a delicate, harp-like instrumental by Deitrick.

"Rick had an album, *Gentle Wilderness* [reissued on Tompkins Square], which came out in

## NOTABLE TOMPKINS SQUARE ALBUMS

For a good overview of Tompkins Square Records—including the music and musicians referenced in this feature—check out these albums, presented in the order of their release or reissue.



**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
*Imaginational Anthem*



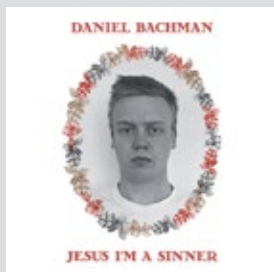
**HARRY TAUSSIG**  
*Fate Is Only Once*



**MAX OCHS**  
*Hooray for Another Day*



**RICK DEITRICK**  
*Gentle Wilderness*



**DANIEL BACHMAN**  
*Jesus I'm a Sinner*



**GWENIFER RAYMOND**  
*You Never Were Much of a Dancer*

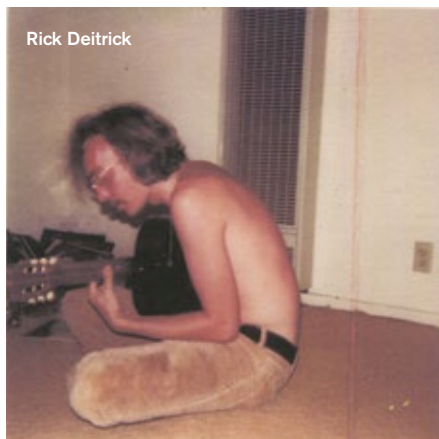
1978 and was totally out of print—but it was never really in print. He would take it out onto hiking trails, leaving his records for someone to find. Now he's just a chill old dude who lives alone in L.A. All of a sudden, people care about his music and maybe someone will come out and use one of his records in a movie or commercial. It's amazing to have helped with that."

Deitrick tells me via telephone, "Much of the music I recorded was on cheap or borrowed tape recorders. I just sent Josh this tape I found not long ago, where I was sitting at the kitchen table and playing a piece that I'd written for my wife, while she was making dinner. You can hear a pan drop in the middle of it. It's been surprising and great to learn that people all around the world are enjoying my music. I just found out that I have a big following in Denmark—and in Japan!"

Rosenthal's knack for unusual sounds has also led him to work with young and ascendant artists, like Daniel Bachman and Gwenifer Raymond, whose work is singular but clearly indebted to the American Primitive tradition. (See a full transcription of Raymond's "Requiem for John Fahey" on page 58.) "Jeff Davidson at WFMU tipped me to Gwenifer," Rosenthal says. "She struck me as a sort of unicorn—a young woman from Wales who channels John Hurt and Skip James. Then I found out she's an astrophysicist, so

throw that in. She's a really cool person and is clearly very proficient, but brings in her own ideas, too. I gravitate toward folks who put an original spin on traditional music, and she certainly does that."

"Working with Josh—who feels like a genuine renegade in the contemporary corpo-

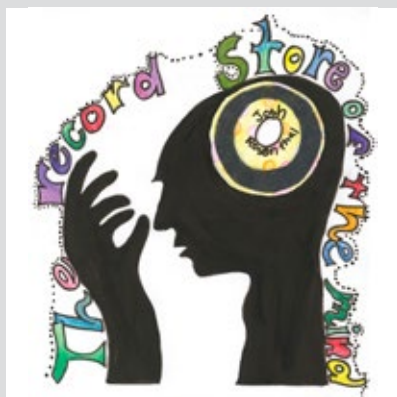


ratocracy of the music industry, a man out of time—has been a pretty life-changing experience: going from playing glorified open mics with two men and a dog to getting really positive press from publications I respect; heading over to the States; putting a record out on real, honest-to-god vinyl. It all seems a little

alternative universe sometimes," Raymond says via email. "I had a lot of Tompkins Square records before any of my association with it started, and I really think the world needs a label like it, hipper than hip and stone-aged."

As Rosenthal reflects on his work for the label, the subject of his own music comes up. A guitarist since he was a teenager, Rosenthal keeps his Healy Tompkins Square guitar (see below) in his office, a few feet from his desk, for easy access. Playing the instrument is part of his daily ritual, but he downplays his skills. "I don't have any training; I stopped learning when I was like 15," Rosenthal says. "I play purely for pleasure, hunting for chords and ideas. The only thing that's good about not being any good is you can't copy anybody. So my playing actually sounds very original because it's not based on anything real."

Still, Rosenthal confesses that he has an ambition to make his own guitar album—not a solo outing, like many of his favorite records, but a collaborative effort. "I think it'll be a collection of guitar patterns, because I don't even want to call my pieces songs, but I'd love to come up with some halfway decent ideas and put them on tape. Then, I'd ask some other, more skilled musicians to incorporate my ideas into something bigger—and make it grand," Rosenthal says excitedly, before excusing himself to take a call from one of his artists. **AC**



## 10TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIALNESS

Josh Rosenthal wanted to do something special—other than release a commemorative album or box set—to celebrate Tompkins Square's 10th anniversary, in 2005. For the occasion he wrote a book, equal parts personal history and music criticism, titled *Record Store of the Mind*. He also reached out to the luthier Trevor Healy, who appears on the Tompkins

Square compilation album *Beyond Berkeley Guitar*, for a custom build.

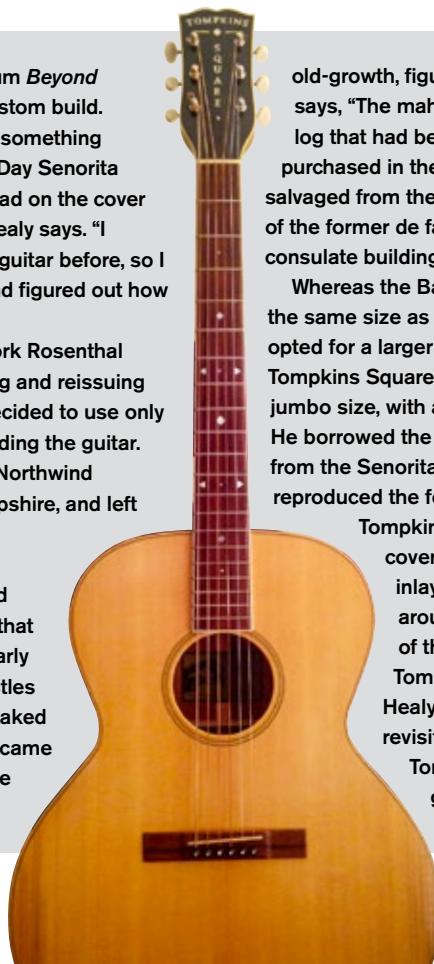
"Josh said he wanted something like the 1930s Bacon & Day Senorita guitar that John Fahey had on the cover of one of his albums," Healy says. "I hadn't built that style of guitar before, so I scrutinized the photo and figured out how I could best interpret it."

Since much of the work Rosenthal does involves unearthing and reissuing old recordings, Healy decided to use only reclaimed woods in building the guitar. He visited Tom Thiel of Northwind Tonewood, in New Hampshire, and left with a set of interesting provenance. For the soundboard, he selected reclaimed Sitka spruce that was originally used in early 20th-century bridge trestles in British Columbia, streaked with mineral stains that came from years of battling the elements; for the sides,

old-growth, figured mahogany. Healy says, "The mahogany came from a log that had been originally purchased in the 1960s and was salvaged from the basement workshop of the former de facto Latvian consulate building in the Bronx."

Whereas the Bacon & Day is roughly the same size as a Gibson L-00, Healy opted for a larger body for the Tompkins Square guitar—a small jumbo size, with a 16-inch lower bout. He borrowed the headstock silhouette from the Senorita, and painstakingly reproduced the font seen on

Tompkins Square album covers for the face's inlays. "I also played around with doing inlays of the birds on the Tompkins Square logo," Healy says. "Maybe I'll revisit the idea if we do a Tompkins Square line of guitars someday."—**AP**





**How Hawaiian  
music helped make  
the guitar America's  
instrument**

**BY MICHAEL WRIGHT**

# ISLAND



Unidentified Hawaiian  
vocal sextet ca. 1920.



Hula dancers pose with a ukulele, a guitar,  
and a taro patch, in this ca. 1890 portrait  
by Honolulu photographer J.J. Williams.  
Courtesy of Hawaii State Archives.



# OLD STYLE

Hawaiian steel guitars were portable enough for sailors to take to sea.

Variety performers like the Kline Duo incorporated Hawaiian guitars into their acts.



**T**hanks to the great commercial success of internationally exported, guitar-based American music, many people today think of the guitar as “America’s instrument.” Many also assume—thanks largely to Hollywood—that this has always been so. But the truth is that in Anglo-America, the guitar was a relative latecomer. Depending on which historical window you choose to open, other instruments had much better prospects for that role: banjos after the Civil War, mandolins in the Gay Nineties, and banjos again in the Jazz Age. To understand how guitars ultimately triumphed, it helps to open a different window . . . onto a group of islands way out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

## INTO THE PEACEFUL SEA

Guitars probably came to the Pacific on Portuguese caravels navigating around Africa during the 15th century; they may also have accompanied Ferdinand Magellan when he claimed the Philippines for Spain in 1521. Spanish missionaries and colonists brought guitars—and guitar making—to the Philippines, where both thrive to this day.

The Hawaiian Islands weren’t “discovered” until 1778, when England’s Captain James Cook dropped anchor and made Hawaii the Pacific’s most important port of call, especially after whaling began in 1812.

Western instruments came with visiting ship crews singing sea shanties and, after 1819, with the growing tide of American missionaries teaching hymns. Whether these crews brought guitars is anyone’s guess, but the Hawaiian people, musically inclined, quickly adopted Western-style music.

## OF CATTLE AND SUGARCANE

Legend has guitars coming to Hawaii with Mexican *vaqueros* from California, who were brought in to round up cattle in 1823. The long-horns had been a gift to King Kamehameha I, who let them roam free, unmolested. Once their sandalwood forests were depleted, Hawaiians turned to beef, hides, and tallow for trade goods.

There’s no hard evidence that the Spanish cowboys had guitars, but Portuguese-speaking sugarcane workers certainly did. Sugarcane was introduced to Hawaii by its original inhabitants, and big sugar plantations had begun by

Guitars were adapted to traditional customs, including dancing.



the 1830s. The indigenous population proved to be unreliable cane-field workers, and by the 1850s, plantation owners were recruiting Chinese laborers, followed by Japanese immigrants in the 1860s. Indentured servants from the Portuguese islands of Madeira and Azores arrived to work the fields in 1878. Days after their arrival, Honolulu newspapers were extolling the street-corner musicians among them. The newcomers played the *machete* or *braguinha* (mini 4-string guitar) and *rajão* (5-string guitar with re-entrant tuning), which would quickly fuse to become the distinctively Hawaiian ukulele. In 1879, three Portuguese woodworkers—Augusto Dias, Manuel Nunes, and Jose do Espirito Santo—arrived and soon were producing Hawaiian stringed instruments including ukes and guitars.

Hawaiians did have a native stringed instrument called the *ukeke* before the arrival of Europeans and Americans. Diplomat and musician Auguste Marques described the *ukeke* in an 1880s monograph as being shaped like a Greek

**Hawaiian steel guitar is played fingerstyle (usually with fingerpicks) on a steel-string Spanish guitar laid flat on the lap.**

lyre “made of flexible wood with strings of cocoa fiber.” The similarity between the names “ukeke” and the later “ukulele” is obvious, although could be purely coincidental.

### SLACK-KEY AND RUSTY BOLTS

Whichever way guitars made it into Hawaii, by the 1870s, they were popular with native players, who were devising the open tunings and unique fingerpicked style that would become known as Hawaiian slack-key guitar. For American music, however, the major influence came from Hawaiian steel-guitar players.

The seminal figure in Hawaiian guitar history is generally conceded to be Joseph Kekuku (1874–1932). According to his own account, in 1889, Kekuku was walking while carrying a guitar and picked up a rusty bolt off the ground. By complete chance, the bolt came in contact with his guitar’s strings, and young Joseph liked the new sound. After experimenting with various other metal objects, including a pocket or table knife and a comb, Kekuku settled on a polished metal bar, and Hawaiian steel guitar (tuned to open A) was born. In 1904, he sailed for the mainland to launch a successful career in vaudeville. Kekuku’s innovative guitar style was

immediately adopted by many other young Hawaiian guitar players.

### FUN ON THE MIDWAY

While Hawaiians were playing guitars, the world’s industrial powers were looking for ways to promote their mushrooming economic prowess. In 1851, England erected the Crystal Palace for the Great Exhibition, the first of more than a century of World’s Fairs, where many nations and industry titans came to flaunt their creations.

More important, World’s Fairs coincided with a growing interest in ethnology and the discovery of both exotic and “primitive” cultures. At the 1893 World’s Colombian Exposition in Chicago—alongside the palaces of Machinery, Agriculture, and Art—was the Midway Plaisance, where visitors not only first encountered the Ferris Wheel, but also got to see a panoramic painting of the Kilauea volcano in Hawaii (lava effects created with electric back-lighting), complete with hula dancers and a male vocal quartet accompanied by ukes, guitars, and taropatches (early ukulele cousins with eight strings set in four courses of two strings each). This was the mainland’s first documented encounter with Hawaiian music.



Meanwhile, sugar and pineapple barons were cooking up a coup in Hawaii, and when Princess Liliuokalani acceded to the crown in 1893, the barons deposed her and tried to have Hawaii annexed as a U.S. territory. Unsuccessful, they formed the Hawaiian Republic in 1894. President William McKinley finally created the Territory of Hawaii in 1900.

### HAWAIIAN MUSIC ON THE SIDE

This annexation accelerated American interest in Hawaiian music. In 1899, steel guitarist July Paka came with a Hawaiian band to San Francisco to cut the first cylinder recordings for Edison (now lost). Paka married a part-Native American dancer called “Toots,” who got a grass skirt and learned some hula moves. They soon began playing the Orpheum vaudeville circuit as Toots Paka’s Hawaiians, establishing the look and sound of Hawaiian music: lead steel (or Hawaiian) guitar, rhythm Spanish guitar, and ukulele.

In 1901, Columbia released the first recording of “Aloha Oe,” and in 1905-06 Victor sent engineers to Honolulu, where they recorded an astonishing 53 sides, essentially creating the Hawaiian songbook. Hawaiian musicians continued to play the World’s Fairs, including the



(left) Keoki E. Awai's Royal Hawaiian Quartet, ca. 1915. Awai (seated) with (left to right): Ben Zablan (Knutsen harp mandolin), Bill Kaina (ukulele), and Henry Komomua (guitar). (below) The U.S. got its first taste of Hawaiian music at the Kilauea Volcano panorama at Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.

Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition (AYP) in Seattle in 1909, which was the first to feature special "Hawaii Days." Hawaiian guitarist Ernest Ka'ai was hired to provide musicians, among them Pale K. Lua and Kekuku, who stayed on to teach steel guitar in Seattle. One of Kekuku's students was Los Angeles music dealer and publisher C.S. DeLano, who became the first known mainland Hawaiian guitar teacher and publisher.

### "HAWAIIAN GUITARS"

Hawaiian steel guitar is played fingerstyle (usually with fingerpicks) on a steel-string Spanish guitar laid flat on the lap. Though preceded by the Portuguese machete and rajão, which also had wire strings, guitars with steel strings became increasingly common in the 1880s. Playing steel guitar requires higher action, obtained with either a taller nut or an extension placed over a regular nut.

The first purpose-built Hawaiian guitars were made by the luthier Chris Knutsen, who likely encountered Hawaiian players at the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition in Portland, Oregon, in 1905. By the 1909 Seattle AYP, Knutsen was making guitars with hinged necks that allowed players to change the action for

Spanish or Hawaiian steel playing. Some non-convertible, hollow-necked, koa-wood versions were made for C.S. DeLano, and these "Kona" guitars became the first mainstream American Hawaiian steel guitars, although most players still used adapted Spanish guitars.

### THE BIRD OF PARADISE

Hawaii-mania reached a new level in 1912, when Richard Walton Tully's book *The Bird of Paradise* was adapted into a smash Broadway musical hit that featured Hawaiian music (played on Hawaiian and Spanish guitars), including a version of "Aloha Oe," and at least one instrumental called "Hawaiian Hula." *The Bird of Paradise* toured the country, causing a sensation everywhere; in 1919, it went to Europe, and none other than Kekuku played guitar in it for eight years. The hit tunes were published, and Tin Pan Alley soon began pouring out Hawaiian-themed songs.

By 1914, a national craze for ukuleles had begun, with Martin beginning uke production the following year. By 1916, Herman Weissenborn had taken over making his famous hollow-necked Kona Hawaiian guitars for DeLano. Martin began making Rolando Hawaiian guitars that same year. These guitars continued into

the early 1920s, with Shireson Bros. (L.A., Maikai brand) and Oscar Schmidt (Jersey City, Hilo) joining the bandwagon.

### THE PANAMA CANAL

The most significant event in America's new fascination with Hawaiian music, however, was the Panama Pacific International Exposition (PPIE), held in San Francisco in 1915 to celebrate the opening of the Panama Canal. Nearly 17 million Americans visited from all over the country. At the Hawaiian Pavilion and on Hawaii Days, visitors could encounter the Hawaiian guitar music of Keoki E. K. Awai's Royal Hawaiian Quartet, Henry Kailimai Quintette Club, Albert Vierra's Hawaiians, the DeLano Hawaiian Steel Guitar and Ukulele Sextette, Joseph Kekuku, Frank Ferera, and Pale K. Lua. People went home wanting to hear more Hawaiian music.

Following the PPIE, Joseph Kekuku's Hawaiian Quintet had success working the Chautauqua circuit (basically America's first summer vacation resorts). Myrtle Stumpf published the first Hawaiian Guitar Method in 1915. And the mighty Sears, Roebuck, and Company bought the Harmony Company, chiefly for their ability to produce Supertone ukes and Hawaiian guitars.

### THE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

The increasing interest in Hawaiian music and instruments created a demand for instruction. Conservatories offering group music lessons for children of the growing middle classes appeared at the end of the 19th century. The Chicago Correspondence School of Music was offering mail-order lessons by 1898, and after Heanon Slingerland, one of its teachers, purchased the school in 1914, he began offering a free instrument to customers who purchased a specified number of lessons. Three years later, customers who ordered lessons got a free ukulele, Hawaiian guitar, or banjo produced in a Slingerland factory.

By the early 1920s, selling lessons with instruments had become pretty well established around the country. Perhaps the most influential purveyor of Hawaiian guitar lessons and instruments was Oahu, founded in Flint, Michigan, by Harry Stanley and George Bronson in 1926. Larger cities had active music-teaching organizations, such as the American Hawaiian Teachers in Los Angeles, who recruited students and either rented or sold instruments.

### HAWAII ON THE AIR

Another important innovation that would further America's love affair with Hawaiian guitar music was radio. After Westinghouse's KDKA in Pittsburgh began widespread





commercial broadcasting in 1920, radio caught on like wildfire, essentially becoming an extension of vaudeville, featuring all the top acts, including musicians playing Hawaiian steel and Spanish guitar. One of these was the legendary Sol Hoopii, who began broadcasting live over KHJ radio in Los Angeles in 1923.

Many other technological advances quickly followed, including the 1926 performance of Roy Smeck playing a Stathopoulos Bros. (Epiphone) 8-string Octa-Chorda (a predecessor of the pedal-steel guitar) in the Warner Bros. Vitaphone film *His Pastimes*, considered by many to be the first “talking picture.”

### JAZZ AND THE TENOR BANJO

One of the attractions of Hawaiian music was that its uptempo rhythms had a lot in common with New Orleans-style jazz, another popular music emerging at the time. The driving forces behind jazz were horns and the tenor banjo, with its bright, percussive attack and rapid decay, which were perfect for a fast, cut-time (2/2) beat. Tenor banjos dominated stringed instrument manufacturing during the heyday of the classic jazz band, roughly from the beginning of World War I to the mid-1920s.

But American tastes were changing. Dance-band leaders were demanding more “showmanship” from their musicians. A tenor banjoist who could double on guitar or ukulele became more valuable. In 1925, Regal Guitars head Frank Kordick responded by introducing the tenor guitar, basically a small guitar with a tenor banjo neck, which immediately caught on.

### SWINGING COUNTRY

At the same time, other guitar-based music was becoming popular. Various types of “country” music were emerging from Appalachian folk traditions. In 1924, Chicago’s WLS debuted the *National Barn Dance* radio broadcast. Dance music had begun a slow shift from syncopated, ragtime-influenced jazz to a less insistent, smoother rhythm that would become “swing” in the 1930s. The new music was more suited to the mellower, woody sounds of a guitar than the clang of the tenor banjo.

According to contemporary trade press accounts, the peak year for tenor banjo production was 1926, followed by a sharp decline. By 1930, guitar production had surpassed that of banjos. After that, guitars never looked back.

### THE ELECTRIC REVOLUTION

With electricity now powering radio, recording, and the talkies, it was only a matter of time before it would get harnessed for guitars. In 1924, John Dopyera filed for a patent on an

all-metal tenor banjo with a sympathetic spun-aluminum resonator cone. In 1925, vaudeville promoter George Beauchamp approached Dopyera about building him a louder Hawaiian guitar, and Dopyera pulled out his banjo idea, leading to the first National Tricone guitar in 1926. Two years later, both the Vega Company and Stromberg-Voisinet (later Kay) introduced the first electric guitars, both acoustics equipped with transducer pickups. Both disappeared so fast that no examples have yet been found.

But the whole picture changed in 1931 when Beauchamp, now an executive with the National String Instrument Corporation, brought the concept of an electromagnetic pickup to his board of directors. When they declined, Beauchamp promptly joined Adolph Rickenbacker, who made National’s metal guitar bodies, to form Ro-Pat-In. In 1932, they introduced the world’s first successful electric guitar, the Elektro A-25 Hawaiian electric lap steel, the cast-aluminum “frying pan.” The new instrument was immediately embraced by Hawaiian steel players, including Alvino Rey, who was broadcast playing one later that year. In early 1933, Joseph Lopez (with Noi Lane’s

Hawaiian Orchestra) made the first electric guitar recording using an A-25 on sides cut for RCA. The new electric lap-steels were quickly playing key roles in music as diverse as the Hawaiian swing of Lani McIntire and his Hawaiians (who recorded with Bing Crosby) and the Western swing of Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys, firmly establishing the electric guitar as a legitimate instrument.

### THE OLD REDHEAD AND TINY UMBRELLAS

Ironically, American infatuation with Hawaiian music came to an abrupt end on December 7, 1941, the day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. After World War II—except for a brief rage for ukuleles inspired by Arthur Godfrey in the early 1950s, as well as the slightly embarrassing fad of tiki bars playing Don Ho records—Hawaiian music largely hibernated until the rediscovery of slack-key guitarists in the mid-1970s sparked the modern revival. Nevertheless, for nearly half a century, the music of Hawaii fueled America’s interest in playing guitars, culminating in the invention of the electric guitar and solidifying the guitar as America’s instrument in the minds of the world. **AG**







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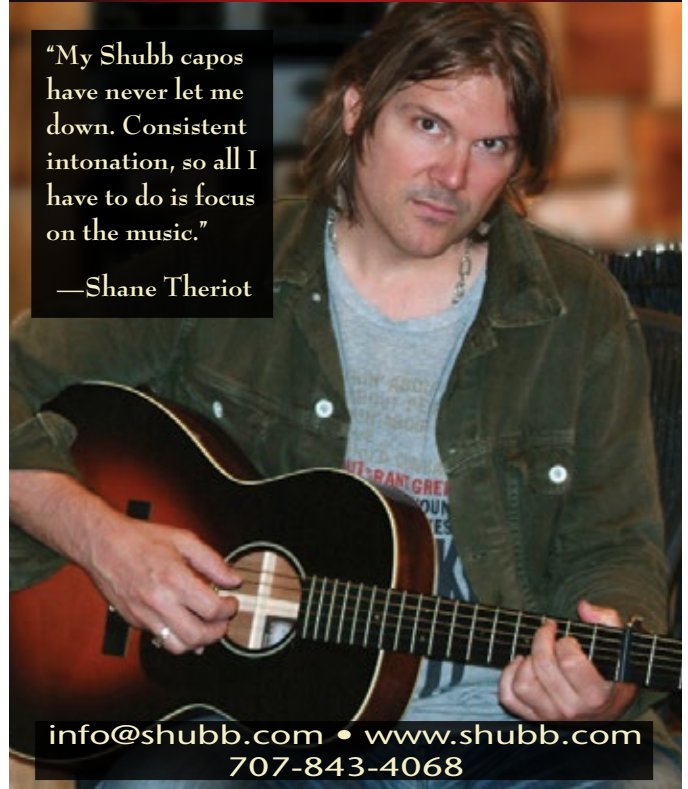
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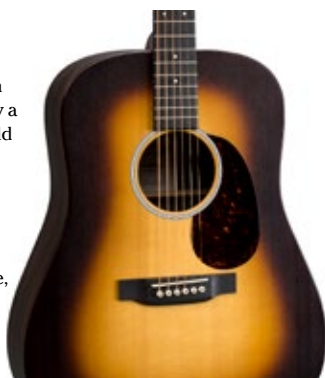
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# STORES THAT DO MORE



Big Music school outreach – ELENA FLIKIER



The Candyman Strings & Things performance – CINDY COOK

**I**t's odd to think of a music shop as a retail outlet. Most retail stores aren't places where you might discover a life-changing passion, practice a skill, or spontaneously interact with a stranger through a shared activity; they're rarely more than a place to buy a basic commodity. Of course, music—and thereby the instruments and equipment required to make it—has never been a basic commodity.

In the modern world of retail, there's little most industries can do to compete with online shopping. But among music stores, the social power of music gives businesses a chance to go far outside of sales to build and shape communities. The four brick-and-mortar shops featured here—those stores that do more—fit the description by offering educational programs, hosting jam sessions, taking part in schools and community events, and fostering a welcoming space for musicians to explore and connect. As a result, they've found that community efforts have made them viable in a rapidly changing economy, while giving customers an enduring vehicle for connection.

"Watching [people] have a sense of community, have a sense of purpose and a sense of place—that's the greatest joy that we get," says Rand Cook, owner of The Candyman Strings & Things, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, "That's the impact that we see. That's what music can do for anybody, for any age group." In some cases, stores like The Candyman not only create communities but transform the ones around them—going well beyond the role of your average retailer.

## A HYBRID MODEL

Out in the Southwest, The Candyman Strings & Things—which takes its name from two different blues songs, both called "The Candyman," one by Reverend Gary Davis and the other by Mississippi John Hurt—has been a defining aspect of the city's culture for nearly 50 years. The store was founded in 1969 by a New York transplant, Matthew Schwartzman. Cook says, "He moved from Manhattan to California to open his music store, and stopped in Santa Fe overnight. After later signing a lease in California, he realized he had missed the grand opportunity of opening a

store in Santa Fe. So he doubled back, and in June of '69 The Candyman opened.

"We had a fire in 1981 that destroyed our original location," Cook continues. "Schwartzman looked to the south and constructed a building literally on the edge of town. It proved to be a very smart move because now we're in the center of town as Santa Fe has grown around us."

A central hub of musical activity, Candyman has developed a community that's largely based around its educational programs. "It's pretty vast. I can barely keep up with everything that's going on," says Cook, whose wife and business partner, Cindy, acts as education and marketing director. At press time, the store's many programs included a ukulele club, Djembe Madness (focusing on the African drum), a guitar master class hosted by staff member Daniel Murphy, group lessons for beginner guitar, and Pappy O'Daniel's Porch Time Jam—a group Americana jam session for all skill levels, held on the store's front porch, weather permitting. In addition to its ensembles, the store has about 200 private lesson students per week.



# FOUR COMMUNITY-MINDED MUSIC RETAILERS AND THEIR THOUGHTFUL OFFERINGS

BY KATE KOENIG



The Candyman Strings & Things strum-along – CINDY COOK



A&G Central Music drum circle – WHITNEY CASH

Surprisingly, that teeming educational atmosphere has only come about over the past ten years. Following the recession of the late 2000s and the sudden passing of the store's founder in 2009, the Cooks took a step back to reevaluate the business—which at the time was strictly retail-oriented—to see how it could expand. "The world and consumerism have changed quite dramatically in the last decade and we realized that, even though we'd been in the community for many years, you can't expect to succeed by hanging a sign and expecting a bunch of people to come in."

Driven by active efforts to welcome new beginner musicians of all ages, the store boasts a new kind of hybrid retail, made up of their education department, retail store, and instrument repair services. "We did a lot of market research, and what we found was that 85 percent of the population doesn't actively make music, but all of that 85 percent *wants* to. There's a great intimidation factor. So we decided to approach music education from a different angle, making it a sort of joyful recreational experience."

Cook, who describes his role as "somewhere between janitor, accounts receivable clerk, and the guy who leaves his coffee cup everywhere," sees maintaining his staff's well-being as a key factor in the store's success. "Almost everybody here plays professionally, so I'm juggling gigging schedules all the time. But we all work together to create a positive foundation for individual growth. The only downside to that is that great employees move on after a while. But we keep great employees coming in because of that philosophy, too."

## THINKING BIG

The largest contemporary music center in Sydney, Australia, aptly named Big Music, has gone outside of creating a community to building the equivalent of a small town of music-making patrons. The business—which features a retail branch in addition to its booming contemporary music school—has 22 studios, four band rehearsal spaces, and its own 200-capacity performance venue. Between private lessons and performance groups, Big Music serves about 800 students

on a weekly basis. It was founded in 2009 by brothers Richard and David Berkman.

"We bought a building and fitted it out, and we figured that we'd try to create a place that was like a one-stop shop—where you could buy an instrument, learn how to play it, and then have a reason to play and perform with others,"

**'What we're doing is far bigger and far more important than just selling stuff.'**

—RICHARD BERKMAN

says Richard Berkman, Big Music's managing director. Both he and his brother worked in finance before they realized their desire to change careers and the opportunity to bring a music center to Sydney. "I worked for 20 years in the finance industry, and no one ever said to me, 'Thank you very much, you've made my day,'" says Berkman. "I get a real kick out of selling instruments and providing music

# STORES THAT DO MORE

education, because people are always saying, 'Wow, thank you, that was just such an awesome experience.'

"For me now, music is part of my health regime," he continues. "It's like the ultimate form of meditation. I didn't realize before I started this business that music could have such a profound effect on your well-being."

In June, Big Music was recognized for its impact on the community at the NAMM 2018 Top 100 Dealers Awards, receiving the Music Makes a Difference prize. The accolade was granted to the business for its work in creating the Lord Howe Island Rockfest, an event that transformed the culture on Lord Howe Island, a remote territory between Australia and New Zealand with a population of 400. The festival began when, in 2010, the Berkman—who would often vacation there—discovered a lack of music performance and education on the island and decided to send teachers and instruments from Big Music to offer lessons and concerts. Eight years later, the festival is an annually sold-out event, and as Berkman puts it, "a hell of a lot of fun."

with us anymore if she hadn't gotten involved with music.' It reduces me to tears when that happens," he says. "But it makes you realize that what we're doing is far bigger and far more important than just selling stuff."

## MUSIC CENTRAL

Presided over by Robert Christie, who has been with the company since 2007, A&G Central Music supports community music in Madison Heights and Macomb Township, Michigan, by creating opportunities where they're needed. That can include aiding community centers in forming ensembles, going into schools to offer private lessons, bringing students together in musical activities, or being a part of community events to share their services with everyone interested in making music.

"We like to go into the community and provide people with the means to get things started, kicking the can down the hill in a way. We're very involved in the beginning, then very little towards the end," Christie says.

Members of A&G played a key role in forming the Ferndale Community Band, among other groups. In a recent collabora-

there to see how much their kids are enjoying themselves," says Christie.

In 2017, A&G's community-oriented approach was recognized when it won the NAMM 2017 Music Makes a Difference Award and the Dealer of the Year Award. The former was awarded for A&G's efforts to remove financial barriers that prevent kids from participating in music programs, particularly in the Detroit area. "The city is struggling with a million problems, but the one nearest to my heart is the lack of opportunity for kids and adults to be a part of music," says Christie. "One of our guiding values is to positively impact our community by providing opportunity to students. To be recognized for making that difference was an amazing experience for our whole team."

Christie sees fostering connections between musicians as an important aspect of community, a philosophy that guides many of the store's programs. "We asked customers in our stores and at our events to donate a dollar in support of a student who can't afford the materials they needed to participate in band class. Along with the donation, they were



Music Inn's Jeff Slatnick

COURTESY OF MUSIC INN/STEVEN ANDERSON

**'You can walk into a clothing store and try on dresses, but you can't hang out there all day. You can come to a music store and stay there playing for hours!'**

—JEFF SLATNICK

encouraged to write a message of support to a student on a postcard we provided." As a result, students "realized they were part of a broader musical community."

While most of A&G's educational and community efforts are happening in the field, the store also offers lessons and ensembles on location. "The way I think about it," Christie says, "is every human can do two things that are somewhat musical: bang a drum and sing." Which is why two key programs A&G hosts at their locations are a ukulele club and a drum circle. The culture around the store is influenced in part by its proximity to several auto industry giants, with their own group comprised exclusively of automotive engineers. "They come into the store often, which is great, because it shows others that everyone is open to making music," Christie says.

"One of the biggest hurdles is how self-conscious we are when we put ourselves out

At their headquarters in Crows Nest, a suburb on Sydney's North Shore, Berkman has felt rewarded countless times over the years by the feedback he hears from customers. "I've had parents come and see me and say, 'I bless the day that I brought my daughter to Big Music, because we felt that we were losing her as a teenager, and she may not be

tion with the Auburn Hills Public Library A&G joined a student reading event to share what's known in the music education industry as an "instrument petting zoo". Staff members arrived at the event with their Band Van, a minivan loaded up with instruments that students could explore for the first time. "The best part is, the parents are





there with anything artistic, and all the value judgments that come with it,” he adds, which is why, in his opinion, it takes a village to help build and preserve a healthy environment for future music-makers. “With the divisive state of the world today, music is the one last place where it’s all positive.”

#### STEP RIGHT INN

“You can walk into a clothing store and try on dresses, but you can’t hang out there all day. You can come to a music store and stay there playing for hours,” says Jeff Slatnick, the current owner of Music Inn World Instruments, a fixture in New York City’s Greenwich Village since it opened in 1958. (Full disclosure: I am currently apprenticing as an instrument repair technician at the shop.) The Music Inn was a cornerstone of the Village’s thriving folk scene in the 1960s. It started out as just a record store, but the original owner, Jerry Halpern, soon added guitars to the mix. “We then started selling banjos, mandolins, and American folk instruments. And it just kind of took off to include all kinds of world instruments,” says Slatnick, referencing the Inn’s current

inventory of folk instruments from Japan, China, Africa, Tibet, Indonesia, Turkey, Bolivia, Mexico, and other countries, in addition to the standard fretted instruments.

As a historical and cultural center in New York City, the Inn is a landmark of musical pop culture, preserving both a living memory of the city’s famous performers as well as offering a platform for young local performers today. Longtime friends and customers have included Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, and Sean Lennon, and everyone from Jeff Buckley to André 3000 (OutKast) have paid a visit. But most vibrant is the Inn’s local community of performers, who find a stage at its Thursday open mic nights and weekend events.

“The city is a competitive place for performers, but there are a lot of original voices to appreciate,” says Joe Siena, the store’s manager, who produces the open mic and events in collaboration with local artists. Founded in 2013, the open mic has a reputation for attracting unique acts, who often borrow from the store’s diverse collection of instruments for their performances, as well as a variety of artists. “The Music Inn has provided me with an amazing

performance space and welcoming community of oddballs and misfits,” says Clayton Smith, a regular at the open mic. “It really feels like a piece of the old West Village.”

The Inn’s deep roots also connect it to other small businesses in the historic neighborhood, such as the famous Smalls Jazz Club—whose founder, Mitch Borden, supplied the hundreds of 1920s and ’30s sheet music covers that paper every inch of the Inn’s downstairs walls. The unmistakable backdrop (installed by Siena) can be seen on the Emmy-award-winning Amazon show *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*.

Between the store’s history and palpably laidback character, tourists, Bob Dylan die-hards, and community members know they can stop by to experience a piece of history, explore hundreds of obscure acoustic folk instruments, and/or participate in an impromptu jam session with strangers and artists from around the world. “We’re different in that. By selling world instruments, we cater to something much greater than ourselves,” says Slatnick. “People might learn about something they never knew existed. But it’s also a place where everybody can be themselves.” **AC**





A metronome is an invaluable tool for improving your playing.

BILL EVANS

# Zone of Maximum Improvement

Learn to play faster by slowing down

BY PAUL MEHLING

Call it a plateau; call it being stuck in a rut. We've all been at that place where time in the woodshed feels so unproductive that it's driving us crazy! If you spend any time practicing, you've probably had the feeling that you're not getting anywhere and that you either cannot play the thing you're working on—or, even worse, that practicing is simply a waste of time (a good excuse to not practice!). While we all know deep down that practice is essential, we may not know how to do so in a way that keeps us moving closer to our targets and goals.

Any player—at any level and in any style—who is working to improve and who wants to spend less time being frustrated can benefit from trying the simple but often overlooked concepts of efficiency outlined in this lesson. As you streamline your practicing to be more

productive, you'll have more fun. More fun will mean more time spent practicing, and more practicing means more improvement. More improvement means more fun, and you'll be caught up in your own upward spiral of loving playing the guitar. Isn't that the point?

## 1 THINK LIKE A TEACHER

Begin by troubleshooting the problems you're having when playing a given lick, scale, excerpt, etc. It's important to know what to listen and look for. Sloppiness comes in many forms—notes that aren't clear or are altogether missed, rhythms that aren't smooth or even correct, phrases that don't come off with ease and confidence. (This list is far from complete—insert your own mistakes to fix here.) By the way, using a recording device to listen to your playing is a great way to uncover your shortcomings and

show you flaws you might not even be aware of. This practice can help give you a valuable outside perspective, not unlike a teacher's.

## 2 FIND YOUR ZMI

It's simple. If you can't play the darn thing, slow down. Find the tempo just below where you cannot play, and work that zone—your Zone of Maximum Improvement (ZMI). Play the notes 100 percent accurately and musically ten times in a row. If you can do that reliably, speed up the tempo. If the new tempo is too fast, go back to the ZMI and try to push the metronome as if you could actually get it to speed up with you. Push, push, push until you can really get out in front of the metronome's beat—without losing the beat altogether. This should allow you to move into the next tempo more easily.

### 3 USE THOUGHTFUL REPETITION

Repetition is key—but only if it's working for, not against, you! Do not practice or reinforce mistakes. If you make a mistake, correct it immediately by slowing yourself down (50 percent of the final tempo is best at first) and then gradually work your way up through small increments (one BPM on a digital metronome or one click of the dial on a mechanical one) to the current tempo. Only then will you be ready to increase the beat.

### 4 AVOID COMMON TRAPS

If the old tempo is too slow and the new tempo is too fast, then go back to Step 2—cultivate the skill of pushing the metronome as if it were possible to get that thing to follow you to a faster tempo. You do this by staying at the tempo where you can reliably play the passage with full confidence and musicality. Then play it again, pushing against the tempo, that is, playing ahead of the beat but staying consistent.

There's a sweet spot there—again, the ZMI. You won't get better playing mistakes at a

faster tempo, but you will get better playing almost faster at a slower pace that is on top of the tempo. On top means you're totally running the show; your notes are clear and confident and you're pushing the tempo faster without losing a sense of the beat. It's exactly the opposite feel from a laid-back jazz soloist who is literally playing behind the beat. Your job here is to play ahead of the beat.

### 5 DO THE BOOMERANG

Warning: This is next-level stuff. Instead of backing off just one beat or metro-

nome click when you find you're at your tempo of playing incorrectly (above your ZMI), try setting the metronome back five clicks and working your way back up through those tempos. The time spent at those slower tempos can improve your confidence and competence enough so that you sail right up to and past your previous ZMI—like a boomerang. This is what you should be doing with your daily warm-ups anyways. Don't just start your practice trying to do what you did yesterday; you need to warm up to it.

AG

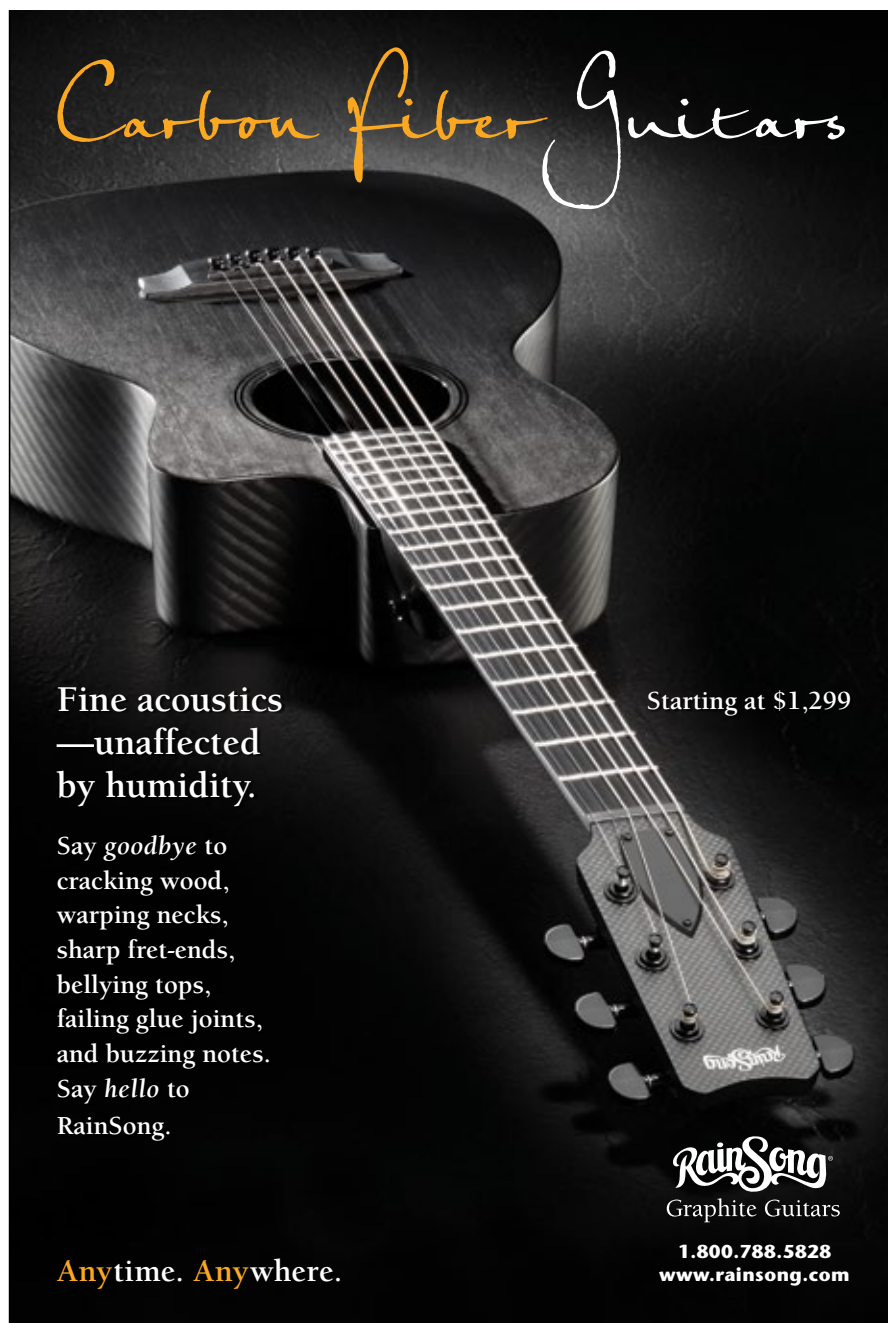
## CREATIVE TIME KEEPING

If you're looking for alternatives to playing with a traditional metronome, try one of these apps suggested by AG contributing writer and educator Adam Levy.



**TIME GURU METRONOME** (\$1.99) by Decibel Consulting/Avi Bortnick has cool features like drum-machine patterns (instead of mechanical beats) and will omit random beats to help solidify your sense of rhythm.

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# Radio Hula

**Fingerstyle master Ledward Kaapana balances melody, rhythm, and variety on a Hawaiian slack-key favorite**

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

It was almost 100 years ago that Hawaii experienced what must have felt like a sonic revolution: In October 1920, the engineer Marion Mulrony, a friend of Alexander Graham Bell, transmitted speech and music signals from the Electric Shop, in downtown Honolulu, in what was the island's first radio broadcast.

To commemorate this milestone, a composer and singer for the Royal Hawaiian Band, Elizabeth Kahau Alohikea (1881–1939), wrote "Radio Hula." This tune, along with her song "Aleloki," ranks among the most popular Hawaiian numbers of all time.

The preeminent multi-instrumentalist, vocalist, and composer Ledward Kaapana has made "Radio Hula" one of his signature numbers. In concert, Kaapana plays the piece solo, with a refreshing, improvisatory feel. This transcription captures Kaapana's performance on the 1994 album *Led Live—Solo* (Dancing Cat Records) and encapsulates a lot of what's great about slack-key guitar: a sweet melody propped up by a rolling Travis-style bass line, chiming harmonics, and lots of subtle ornamental variations throughout.

## INTO THE TARO PATCH

Slack-key guitar, of course, refers to an instrument that's tuned lower than standard, and one of the most common tunings in Hawaiian music is taro patch, or open G. (For more on the history of Hawaiian guitar, see *Island Style*, on page 28.)

If open G is new to you, here's how to get into it: Starting in standard tuning, lower strings 1, 5, and 6 by a whole step each, while leaving string 2, 3, and 4 alone. Your open strings should now form an open G chord, with the root on string 5 and its fifth (D) as the lowest note. One of the advantages of this tuning is that it allows you to play major chords with a first-finger barre and add melodic embellishments with the other fingers.

## THAT ALL-IMPORTANT SWING FEEL

This interpretation of "Radio Hula" owes much of its charm to a laid-back but steady



JOEY LUSTERMAN

swing feel. If you're unfamiliar with this rhythmic approach, which is essential to much jazz and blues, it's important to understand it before you pick up your guitar. You can think of it like this: Instead of being played evenly as written, eighth notes are rendered long-short, at the approximate ratio of 2:1.

In other words, the notes on the *ands* of beats—like all of the up-stemmed notes in measure 8, save for the 12th-fret D on beat 3—are played slightly after they would be if played straight rather than swung. If this is at all confusing, spending some time listening to the recording should help clear things up. The feel is more important than precision.

## OVERALL STRATEGIES

With such an attractive assortment of ideas represented in the notation here, it is tempting to plow through "Radio Hula" and learn it as quickly as possible. That isn't the most sensible plan, though. Unless you're the hottest fingerpicker, it's preferable to tackle the piece in bite-sized pieces, making sure that you can play each morsel with perfection before moving on.

Kaapana plays with a thumbpick as well as an index-finger pick. Alternatively, you could use your fingernails or bare flesh, and also use your middle finger in addition to your index on the melody notes. Note that while the bass pattern is notated strictly in single notes, Kaapana sometimes brushes his thumb against an adjacent string(s) when picking, perhaps inadvertently. Feel free to do the same at periodic intervals for added texture.

Some other general pointers: In many cases, it might be best not to think of the music in terms of its separate components—namely, a melody and a bass line—but as vertical slices, paying close attention to where the bass notes and the melody line up. In bar 8, for instance, this simultaneity only happens on beat 3, and the following measure on beats 1 and 3. If you work through the music methodically like this, the alternating bass line and syncopated melody should come together naturally.

There are other spots, like the more active melody lines in bars 13 and 14, where it might be beneficial to isolate the up-stemmed notes. A potentially tricky area occurs in measure 14, beat 2, where the melodic leap of a perfect fourth, from the ninth-fret B to the 14th-fret E, requires an impressive stretch, with your first finger fretting the lower note and your fourth finger catching the higher one. Make sure that you can play all of those eighth-note triplets with absolute precision before adding the thumb-picked bass pattern.

If some of the melodic embellishments are at first too difficult to pull off—like the grace notes (quick flourishes, indicated with small notes) in the first half of bar 31 and elsewhere—simply omit them. Speaking of embellishments, your ultimate goal in learning "Radio Hula" is to take it beyond what is notated here. Learn all of Kaapana's moves and get them into your muscle memory—without losing sight of the easy swing groove. With any luck, you'll then be able to improvise your own little variations on this Hawaiian classic or add some of these ideas to other songs.

AC

\*Taro patch tuning: D G D G B D

Free time

G<sub>6</sub> C/D

let ring throughout

\*Tune down an additional half step to match recording.

C<sub>13</sub> C/D C<sub>13</sub>

Moderately  $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^3$

G C G

D G

Cont. on p. 44



Cont. from p. 43

16 **D7** **G**

20 **C** **G** **D**

24 **G** **D7** **G**

28 **C** **G**

32 **D** **G**

16 2 0 1 0 4 5 0 5 0 0 11 11/12 12 12 12/14 12 12/14 12 9 0 0

20 5 5 7 5 14 12 12 12 14 12 9 0 0 11 11/12 12 9 12 12 9 12 11 10 9 12 11

24 10 9 12 9 14 9 0 0 1 0 4/5 5 0 2 0 0 0 2 0 1 0 4 5 5 0 0 0

28 12 12 5 5 12 12 0 0 0 5 7 5 5 14 12 12 12 14 12 9 9 0

32 11 11/12 12 9 12 12 9 12 9 12 9 12 9 12 9 0 1 0 4 5 0 0 0 0 5 0 4 2 0



**D7** **G**

36

Harm. Harm.

**C** **G** **D**

40

**G** **D7** **G**

44

**C**

48

Harm. Harm.

**G** **D7** **G** **D7**

52

Harm. Harm. Harm.

Cont. on p. 46



Cont. from p. 45

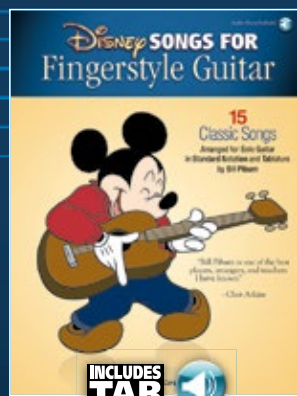
57 **G** **C** **D** **G**

62

66 **D7** **G**

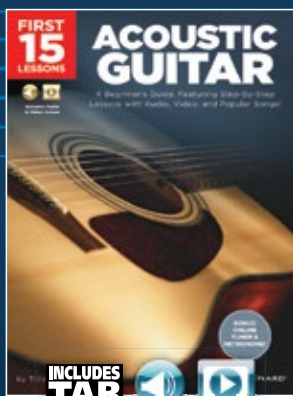
70 **C** **D**

74 **G** **D7** **G** *Harm.*



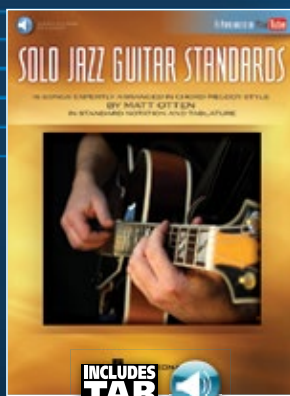
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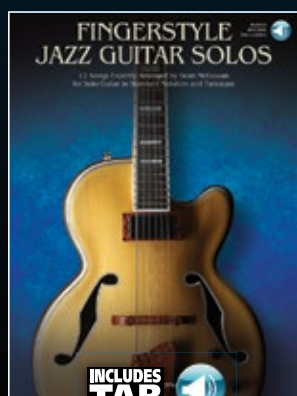
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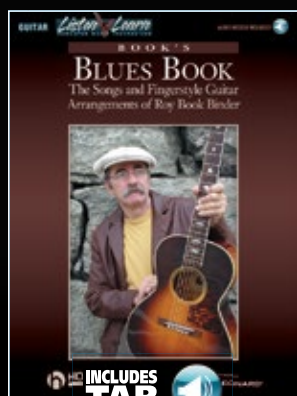
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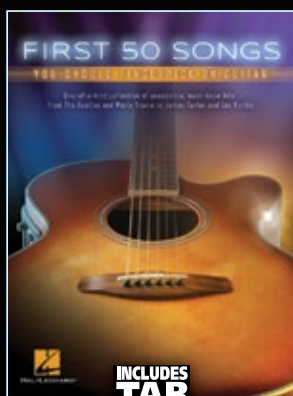
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Jamie Stillway



CHAD LANNING

# Points of Departure

Generating creative new ideas from Travis picking

BY JAMIE STILLWAY

If you have spent any amount of time exploring the world of fingerstyle guitar, you no doubt have heard of Travis picking. (For a refresher, see “The Nuts and Bolts of Travis Picking” at [AcousticGuitar.com](http://AcousticGuitar.com).) Named after the country-and-western guitarist Merle Travis, it’s a popular style of fingerpicking that has since worked its way into the hands of many guitarists in all styles.

With a solid understanding of the fundamentals, you can begin to view Travis picking not just

as a series of static patterns, but also as an approach that can be altered to fit your own style. This lesson will help you employ your existing Travis-picking skills as a tool to develop your playing in a more personalized and creative way.

Throughout this month, keep in mind that a common pitfall when referring to anything as a pattern—whether it be fingerpicking or strumming—is you may begin to believe there is only one correct way to play it. Starting to view patterns as merely templates from which to expand on can help you break out of monotonous ruts and provide a foundation for setting out on your own musical explorations.

## WEEK ONE

While it’s true that Travis picking is an alternating-bass style, modifying the mechanics of your picking hand can lead to a new expanse of musical ideas. This week is about keeping your thumb on one string, rather than alternating between two or three, as is common with Travis picking.

**Example 1a** shows a common variation of the pattern as applied to an A chord. The thumb alternates between strings 5 and 4, and the index and middle finger are assigned to the treble strings. Looking ahead at **Examples 2a–3b**, note how the thumb changes to accommodate the chords with the root on the fourth and sixth strings, respectively. If you are new to Travis picking, practice Ex. 1a with other first-position chords to familiarize yourself with the general picking principles.

**Example 1b** retains the same idea on the treble strings, the only difference being the thumb isn’t alternating. As the thumb still plays each quarter note on the downbeat, the motion of that finger is essentially identical. Take time to note how these simple changes can yield an entirely different sound and feel.

**Example 1c** hints at new melodic ideas on the treble strings with the addition of the flatted seventh, G. The series in **Examples 2a–b** applies the same idea to D and D7 chords, while **Examples 3a** and **3b** are based

## Beginners’ Tip #1

If you are unable to maintain independence between your thumb and fingers, slow down and pay attention to what you’re doing. It’s always a good idea to check in with a metronome at a slow tempo, say 40–50 bpm, and make sure your thumb is aligned with the click.



**WEEK 1**

**Example 1a**

**A**

**Example 1b**

**A**

**Example 1c**

**A7**

**Example 2a**

**D**

**Example 2b**

**D7**

**Example 3a**

**E**

**Example 3b**

**E7**

**WEEK 2**

**Example 4**

**A<sub>m</sub> D<sub>m</sub> E**

**Example 5**

**A<sub>m</sub> D<sub>m</sub>**

**Example 6**

**E A<sub>m</sub> A<sub>m</sub>**

etc.



on E and E7 chords. When you're comfortable with the variations, plug them into a simple progression, such as a 12-bar blues in the key of your choosing.

## WEEK TWO

You can make slight variations to the Travis pattern in order to accommodate different time

### Beginners' Tip #2

A time signature of 3/4 indicates there are three beats per bar instead of four, as in 4/4 or common time. To get used to 3/4, also known as waltz time, strum the chords while counting aloud.

signatures. If you have yet to explore playing in a meter like 3/4 or 6/8, a common way to get started is by playing arpeggios, as demonstrated in the simple repeating patterns of **Example 4**—great for providing rhythmic accompaniment in the key of A minor. Try picking each bass note on beat 1 with your thumb, followed by your index and middle or index, middle, and ring fingers.

For arranging a melody—or a more dynamic accompaniment sound—try some patterns like those shown in **Example 5**, a short progression also in A minor. Notice that the thumb picks the root on beat 1, and then the fifth or octave on beats 2 and 3. You could also play one bass note per bar—use the pattern established in **Example 6** and duplicate it across the melody in Ex. 5.

After you've developed some familiarity with these ideas, try applying these techniques to other chords you know and see what you come up with on your own. Again, it's important to remember that these examples are merely suggestions.

### Beginners' Tip #3

**Dropped D**—the same as standard tuning, but with a low D instead of E—offers an easy introduction to alternate tunings. To quickly drop your sixth string to D without a tuner, use the open fourth string (which is also D, but an octave higher) as a reference point.

## WEEK 3

Tuning: D A D G B E

### Example 7

D

### Example 8

D<sub>m</sub>



For Example 7, tune to dropped D by picking the open D and E strings and lowering the latter until it also sounds as D.



ADAM PERLMUTTER

### WEEK THREE

Up to this point, you've focused on picking-hand variations. Now, you'll home in on the fretting hand. One of the ergonomic benefits of fingerstyle guitar is that you can pare down your chord shapes, playing just the necessary strings with your picking hand. Thanks to the fretboard's redundancy—meaning the same notes repeat in several locations—there's a staggering number of voicing possibilities for any given chord. The only limits are your patience and willingness to venture into the uncharted territories of the fretboard.

For **Example 7**, tune to dropped D in order to explore D major triads (remember, chords having three different notes) on the top three strings. As you play this figure, pay attention to how the notes of the picking hand change slightly within each chord shape. This is just a gentle reminder that the pattern is not set in stone. With further study, you can also integrate these ideas with minor chords by considering which string has the third on it, and then lowering it a half step, or one fret.

Now try playing Ex. 7 again, but using the D minor voicings shown in **Example 8**. Although the notion of music theory can be intimidating to some, taking time to learn and understand triads will go a long way. For those interested, a great place to get started is Gretchen Menn's series of Basics lessons in recent issues.

### WEEK 4

#### Example 9

Example 9 is a musical exercise for acoustic guitar, presented in two systems. Each system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#).

**System 1:**

- Chords:** D, D/E, D/F#, G
- Treble Staff:** Four measures, each containing a D major triad (D, F#, A) in different voicings.
- Bass Staff:** Four measures of fingerings corresponding to the chords above. Fingerings include 3, 0, 2, 3, 0, 0, 2, 0, 0, 0, 4, 0, 0, 0, 5, 5.

**System 2:**

- Chords:** D, D/E, D/F#, G, D
- Treble Staff:** Five measures, each containing a D major triad in different voicings.
- Bass Staff:** Five measures of fingerings corresponding to the chords above. Fingerings include 2, 0, 0, 0, 2, 0, 0, 0, 2, 0, 0, 0, 4, 0, 0, 0, 5, 5, 2, 3, 2, 0, 0.



## WEEK FOUR

A convenient way to add harmonic interest and movement to simple chord progressions is to explore inversions and non-chord tones in the bass. Still in dropped D, **Example 9** is a short progression with three measures of D and one bar of G, wherein each measure features a different note of the D major scale in the bass. Thus, you have a progression of D–D/E–D/F#–G.

Starting in the fifth measure, the example repeats with a similar idea in the bass, but the notes on the treble strings have been changed slightly for added melodic variations. As with all new ideas, don't be overly

concerned with getting it “right.” Remember to make sure you are listening and connecting with the music you are making. Inversions are a simple yet powerful concept that can inspire a whole new chordal vocabulary—a terrific asset for Travis picking.

Hopefully, you will soon start incorporating this lesson's Travis-inspired ideas into your repertoire. For example, if you've got a song that you've been strumming, see if you can figure out a fingerpicking alternative. And if any of the ideas presented this month have flummoxed you, do not despair. Take joy in embracing the inherent mutability in music, and delight in those moments of unknown, for it is

then that you may begin to hear your own musical voice. Don't forget to enjoy the journey.

*Jamie Stillway is a fingerstyle soloist and educator in Portland, Oregon. [jamiestillway.com](http://jamiestillway.com)*

## Beginners' Tip #4

An inversion means the lowest note you are playing in the chord is something other than the root. So a D/F# chord, for instance, is a D triad with the third, F#, as the lowest note.

## TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

The expressiveness of guitar playing is greatly enhanced by slides and pull-offs, like the articulations in this etude. Start with a slide into a D chord in the first position, followed by a quick change to a D7 and then a fragment of a

D chord at the seventh fret. Play the fifth-fret root of the G7 chord in measure 5 with your third finger, and use your first and fourth fingers for the notes at frets 3 and 6, respectively. Strive to play everything as smoothly as possible.

Tuning: D A D G B E

The musical score is written for guitar in DADGBE tuning. It consists of three systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system (measures 1-4) features chords D, D7, D, and D7. The second system (measures 5-8) features chords G7 and G. The third system (measures 9-12) features chords A7, D, D7, and D. The bass staff includes fret numbers and fingerings (1-4) for various notes, including slides and pull-offs. The treble staff shows the corresponding melodic lines.

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# 50 Ways to Leave Your Lover

A Paul Simon classic offers a good lesson in harmonic imagination

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

One morning in the mid-1970s, singer-songwriter Paul Simon woke up and suddenly the phrase "The problem is all inside your head, she said to me" popped into his head. Simon then fired up his Rhythm Ace drum machine and built on this idea to compose what would prove to be one of his most popular songs: "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover," which first appeared on his 1975 solo album, *Still Crazy After All These Years*.

As Adam Levy explains in his lesson on page

16, Simon is among the most harmonically sophisticated of folk-pop songwriters, and "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover" is packed with lush chord voicings, especially in its intro and verse sequence, shown here in the original key of E minor. When you work through this figure, which is best played with fingerpicking, take note of the smooth movement between chords, the use of extensions like the flatted ninth, and the general moody vibe evoked by Simon's harmonic choices.

The chorus modulates to the relative major

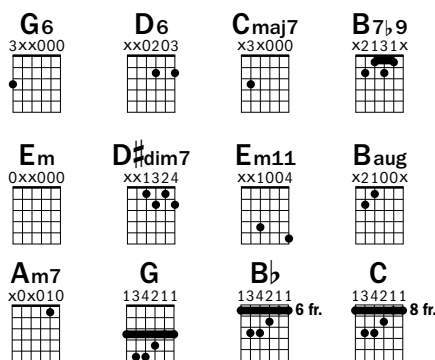
key, G, and is harmonically simpler and rhythmically more active. Try using a funky rhythm pattern like the one depicted here. Using a pick or thumbpick, keep your picking hand moving in a continuous, up-and-down 16th motion, releasing fretting-hand pressure at certain points for a percussive sound. The chorus also offers a chance for you to improvise fills from the G minor pentatonic scale (G B♭ C D F), as heard from electric guitarist John Troupea on the original studio recording.

AC

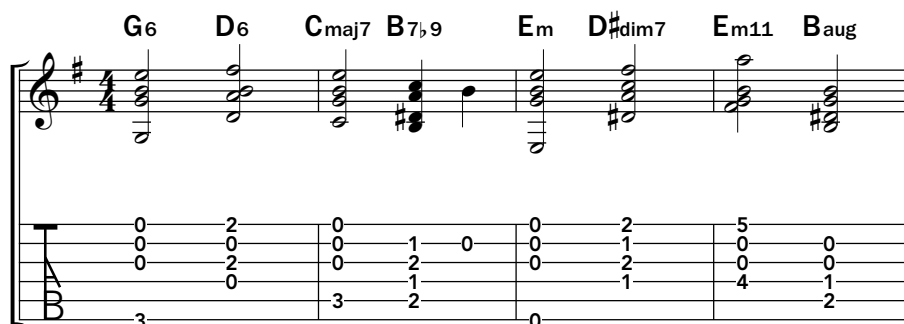


Paul Simon

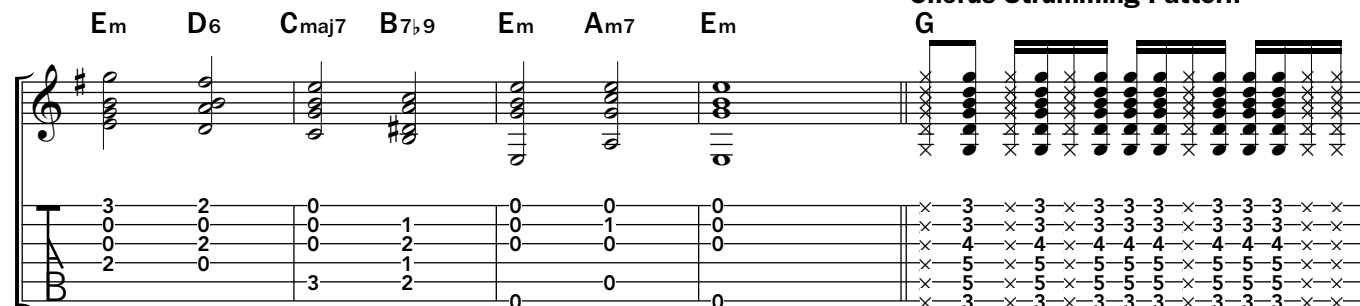
## Chords



## Intro/Verse Figure



## Chorus Strumming Pattern



## Intro

(6 bars percussion)

**G6 D6 Cmaj7 B7<sup>9</sup> Em D#dim7 Em11 Baug**  
**Em D6 Cmaj7 B7<sup>9</sup> Em Am7 Em**

- G6 D6 Cmaj7 B7<sup>9</sup>**  
 1. The problem is all inside your head she said to me

**Em D#dim7 Em11 Baug**  
 The answer is easy if you take it logically

**Em D6 Cmaj7 B7<sup>9</sup>**  
 I'd like to help you in your struggle to be free

**Em Am7 Em**  
 There must be 50 ways to leave your lover

- G6 D6 Cmaj7 B7<sup>9</sup>**  
 2. She said it's really not my habit to intrude

**Em D#dim7 Em11 Baug**  
 Furthermore I hope my meaning won't be lost or misconstrued

**Em D6 Cmaj7 B7<sup>9</sup>**  
 But I'll repeat myself at the risk of being crude

**Em Am7 Em**  
 There must be 50 ways to leave your lover

**Am7 Em**  
 50 ways to leave your lover

## Chorus

**G**  
 You just slip out the back, Jack

**B<sup>b</sup>**  
 Make a new plan, Stan

**C**  
 You don't need to be coy, Roy

**G**  
 Just get yourself free

Hop on the bus, Gus

**B<sup>b</sup>**  
 You don't need to discuss much

**C**  
 Just drop off the key, Lee

**G**  
 And get yourself free

Ooh slip out the back, Jack

**B<sup>b</sup>**  
 Make a new plan, Stan

**C**  
 You don't need to be coy, Roy

**G**  
 You just listen to me

Hop on the bus, Gus

**B<sup>b</sup>**  
 You don't need to discuss much

**C**  
 Just drop off the key, Lee

**G**  
 And get yourself free

- G6 D6 Cmaj7 B7<sup>9</sup>**  
 3. She said it grieves me so to see you in such pain

**Em D#dim7 Em11 Baug**  
 I wish there was something I could do to make you smile again

**Em D6 Cmaj7 B7<sup>9</sup>**  
 I said I appreciate that and would you please explain

**Em Am7 Em**  
 About the 50 ways

- G6 D6 Cmaj7 B7<sup>9</sup>**  
 4. She said why don't we both just sleep on it tonight

**Em D#dim7 Em11 Baug**  
 And I believe in the morning you'll begin to see the light

**Em D6 Cmaj7 B7<sup>9</sup>**  
 And then she kissed me and I realized she probably was right

**Em Am7 Em**  
 There must be 50 ways to leave your lover

**Am7 Em**  
 50 ways to leave your lover

*Repeat Chorus and fade to percussion*



# Requiem for John Fahey

Gwenifer Raymond's unique take on the American Primitive tradition

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

Several years ago the multi-instrumentalist and composer Gwenifer Raymond was trying to learn John Fahey's "Requiem for John Hurt" when she realized she was playing it incorrectly. Raymond then transformed this misinterpretation into a piece of her own, "Requiem for John Fahey," which she recorded for her debut album, *You Never Were Much of a Dancer* (Tompkins Square).

Like Fahey's original elegy to John Hurt, Raymond plays "Requiem for John Fahey" in open C. To get into this tuning from standard, lower string 6 down two whole steps to C; strings 5 and 4 by a whole step each, to G and C; the third string, G, remains the same; raise

string 2 by a half step to C; string 1, the high E string, remains the same. When you strum the open strings together, you should hear a rich and resonant open C chord.

There are no chord symbols in this transcription of "Requiem for John Fahey" because the piece is, for all intents and purposes, harmonically static, based on a long I chord (C). "Sonically, I like to shift moods around in my tunes, giving them some sort of emotional evolution as they progress, and usually this is just based on instinct," Raymond says, explaining her approach to composition. "I try to not overthink the process and let my fingers naturally lead themselves to where they want to be—sometimes letting the

most straightforward and harmonious melody play out and then, when the moment seems right, playing some angular sequence at odds with what preceded it."

Prime examples of those unexpected sequences happen in measures 32–35. In 32 and 33, Raymond plays notes that imply a C7♭5 chord, and in 34 and 35, she juxtaposes the major third (E) and the minor third (D♯/E♭)—sonorities far more common in jazz than in the folk tradition. Raymond says, "In my abject ignorance of musical theory, I call these dissonances 'wrong notes'"—a good reminder of the brilliant results that can be had in being guided by the ear rather than by theory. **AC**



Gwenifer Raymond



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# REQUIEM FOR JOHN FAHEY

Cont. from p. 59

16 *play three times*

8 5 5 5 7 5 0 0 2 3 0 0 3 3 0 2 2 0 0

20

8 5 5 0 0 8/10 8 10 9 10/12 12 10 12 10 0 0 0 0

24

11 12 12 10 2 3 0 0 10/12 12 10 12 10 0 0 0 0

28

11 11 11 10 10 10 0 0 7 0 7 0 0 0 0 0 0

32

10 11 10 11 10 11 10 9 7 7 0 0 0 7 0 10 0 10

36

0 10 0 10 0 10 7 8 7 0 0 9 8 9 7

40

5 0 5 5 0 3 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

To Coda

D.S. al Coda  
(take repeats)

Coda

44

3 0 0 3 0 0 0 0

46

0 0 0 2 3 0 0 0

48

4 5 0 0 6 7 0 0 10 12 9 11 0 0

52

0 0 12 11 12 12 11 12 0 11 12 12 12



# Fingerboard Oil: Is it “Snake Oil?”

What can fingerboard oil do for me?

BY MAMIE MINCH

**Q:** *I have a question about fretboard oil. Is it a good idea, or is it snake oil? Once or twice a year, I clean the frets on my guitar and oil the fretboard. I do this to prevent the fretboard from drying out and possibly cracking. Recently, I've been reading posts on forums where people are saying that oiling does nothing but make a fretboard look nice for a short period of time. I've always assumed that the oil would soak into the fretboard and act as a moisturizer. Am I wrong? What are your feelings on oiling a guitar fretboard?*

—Ryan, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

**A:** This is a great question. We do so much in the hopes that our guitars will sound their best, look their best, and age as gracefully as possible, and it can be frustrating to hear claims that something that seems to make so much sense isn't doing anything. There are several ways to think about this question. Fingerboards tend to be made out of dense, hard woods. Some woods, like rosewood, are oily themselves. In fact, a light polish on a buffing wheel brings up some of the oil in a rosewood fingerboard, which gives it depth and makes it look shiny. Let's talk about wood for a moment.

If what we are trying to do is prevent cracks, let's think about what causes them. We know that if a piece of wood isn't aged long enough or dried slowly enough, it can continue to change shape even after it's glued onto another piece of wood. Over time, this distortion, especially while pulling against a glue joint, can be enough to cause a piece of wood to crack. Further, because all wood does some amount of swelling and shrinking—even well-aged and -dried wood—we want to prevent that from being too extreme. For most of us, this means we need to make sure that our guitars don't get dry. Dryness is the only sure way I know to get a crack in your fingerboard. So, no, wood



doesn't need anything smeared on it to keep it from cracking. All it needs is a stable, properly humidified environment.

But don't let that keep you from doing something that you like to do! Fingerboard oil can indeed condition, moisturize, and beautify wood. Almost all versions of fingerboard oil are made of mineral oil, including lemon oil, which is just a light mineral oil that may have a lemon scent added. Some modern formulations may have wax or silicone in them and these are the ones to steer clear of. The oils with wax or silicone additives can build up on the surface of wood, attracting dust and schmutz; so while the wood will appear shiny and smooth when it is first applied, it doesn't take long for the fingerboard to look dingy and dirty. Often I find myself cleaning this stuff off of boards that come into the shop.

I hope this answer isn't too disappointing. In fact, I use fingerboard oil whenever I do a setup, before stringing it back up again. It is satisfying to really see the beauty and luster of a good-looking piece of wood. Anything that increases your enjoyment of your guitar without doing damage is cool by me! The only way to be sure your fingerboard won't crack is to tune up your time machine, go to where rosewood trees grow, and make sure the tree that is your future guitar is sectioned well, aged, and dried properly. If you don't have a time machine, here's what you can do: humidify your guitar whenever the air is dry, and moisturize the fingerboard with oil to keep it looking great.

Mamie Minch is the co-owner of Brooklyn Lutherie and an active blues performer. [brooklynlutherie.com](http://brooklynlutherie.com)



Mamie Minch

## GOT A QUESTION?

Uncertain about guitar care and maintenance? The ins-and-outs of guitar building? Or a topic related to your gear? Ask *Acoustic Guitar's* resident repair expert Mamie Minch. Send an email titled “Repair Expert” to Senior Editor Greg Olwell at [greg.olwell@stringletter.com](mailto:greg.olwell@stringletter.com), and he'll forward it to Mamie.



If AG selects your question for publication, you'll receive a complimentary copy of AG's *The Acoustic Guitar Owner's Manual*.

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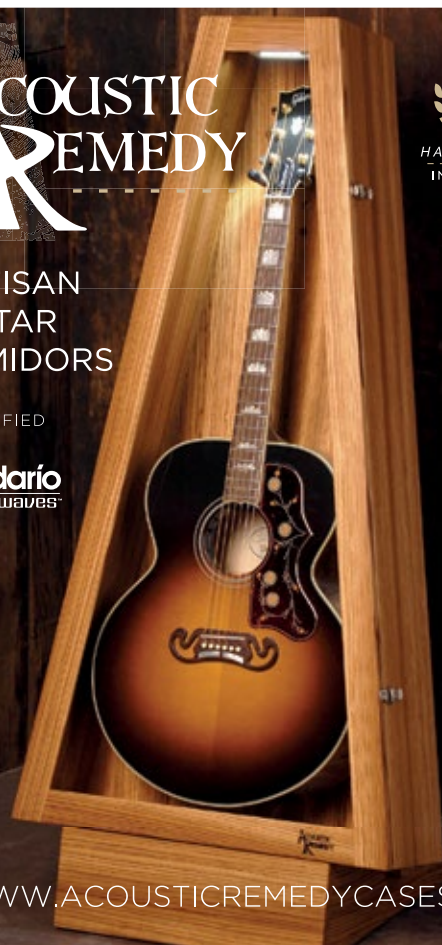
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# Alvarez-Yairi Honduran DYM60HD

**A forgotten stash of vintage Honduran mahogany finds new life in a silky dreadnought**

**BY PETE MADSEN**

The partnership between Yairi and Alvarez goes back several decades, with the Alvarez-Yairi stamp reserved for Alvarez's finest instruments. While much of Alvarez's line is manufactured in China, the Yairi-branded guitars are made in a small shop in Kani, Japan, where modern power tools are eschewed in favor of hand tools, like spokeshaves for carving necks, and hide-glue construction is standard throughout.

For cannon-like sound with thumping bass and treble clarity, many guitarists prefer dreadnought-sized instruments. The Alvarez-Yairi DYM60HD is a guitar that speaks to the quality of a classic dreadnought, but includes some modern appointments, such as a direct-coupled bridge and ebony tuners, which should give the dread enthusiast something to ponder.

The DYM60HD was conceived in collaboration with blues guitarist and one-time Allman Brothers Band member Jack Pearson. For the soundboard, Alvarez and Pearson opted for Adirondack spruce, paired with Honduran mahogany from a recently rediscovered stash that had been seasoning for over 40 years.

I pulled the DYM60HD from its classy tweed case with leather trim and was immediately impressed by the guitar's artistry. The instrument has a striking elegance. Its relatively pale AAAA Adirondack spruce soundboard is centered with a shimmering abalone rosette, which contrasts nicely with the dark ebony fretboard and bridge.

The mahogany back and sides radiate a deep and striped reddish-brown glow from under the thin gloss finish, and gold Gotoh tuners with ebony buttons add to the elegant display. There are fret markers on the side of the neck, but the fretboard bears only a single inlay, an Alvarez-Yairi insignia at the 12th fret. Instead of the usual faux tortoiseshell, the DYM is outfitted with a clear plastic teardrop pickguard. And inside the box, the guitar sports forward-shifted scalloped X-bracing and the same meticulous attention to detail as outside.







An interesting feature is Yairi's patented direct-coupled bridge system, which separates the bridge-pin block from the saddle. A base mounted on the underside of the soundboard provides support, avoiding the "uplifting" action of other conventional bridge systems. This also results in a steeper angle between the actual bridge and anchoring mount—which, at least theoretically, improves the transference of string vibration to the top.

### FLUID AND FULL

A natural comparison for the DYM60HD would be a Martin D-18. The Yairi's C-shaped neck feels similar to that of a D-18 and will be a good fit for most hands. The 1-23/32-inch nut (just shy of 1-3/4-inch) provided plenty of room for my fretting hand to navigate the neck. Like most dreadnought-sized guitars, the DYM60HD has a 25-1/2-inch scale, which feels slightly stiff to me but is by no means uncomfortable. I played single-string runs up and down the one-piece mahogany neck and, despite its semi-gloss finish, I felt no stickiness or impediments to

fluid playing. When I strummed the guitar heartily, first-position chords sounded full and rich, but not undesirably boomy.

Generally speaking, mahogany guitars are known for punchiness, while their rosewood counterparts sound a little warmer. As expected, the DYM60HD has bass-heavy mid-range punch. I would have expected the treble strings to be a little brighter than what the guitar offered, but it still sounded rich and vibrant, perhaps thanks to the aged mahogany.

I recently played Martin's Model 1 America, which is essentially a D-18 that replaces mahogany with sycamore and pairs it with an Adirondack top. I didn't have both guitars to compare side by side, but these two guitars play and sound very similar, cost about the same, and display impeccable quality that both professional and amateur players could appreciate.

### STRUMMING VS. FINGERPICKING

If you are primarily a strummer and flatpicker, the balance between the bass and treble on the Alvarez might not be as pronounced as it

would be for a fingerpicker, who'd probably have to compensate by picking the treble strings harder and/or backing off on the bass strings. I found that adjusting my picking attack didn't quite do the trick when I finger-picked on the DYM60HD. The bass was still a little overpowering and I wanted a little more sustain and brightness from the treble. I don't want to overstate this issue, however, because my experience with Adirondack-topped guitars is that they take a while to open up and it's more than likely this guitar will shimmer after more playing time.

The big sound and silky playability of the Alvarez DYM60HD puts it right in league with other high-end guitars. For players in the market for a good-quality dreadnought, the Yairi Honduran will give flatpickers and strummers alike something to consider; it will also be a great choice for fingerpickers, provided they're patient enough to let the top settle in. If you have the opportunity to sit down in a shop with the DYM60HD and some other quality dreadnoughts, don't be surprised if the Alvarez is the one you walk out the door with. **AC**



## SPECS

**BODY** 14-fret dreadnought with Honduran mahogany back and sides and AAAA-grade Adirondack spruce top with forward-shifted scalloped X-bracing; abalone rosette; ivoroid binding; gloss finish; clear plastic pickguard

**NECK** One-piece mahogany with semi-gloss finish; 25-1/2" scale; 20-fret ebony fretboard and headstock overlay; abalone inlaid headstock and fingerboard; 1-23/32" nut width; gold Gotoh 510 tuners with ebony buttons

**OTHER** Bone nut and saddle; ebony direct-coupled bridge with ebony bridge pins; D'Addario EXP16 coated phosphor bronze strings (.012-.053); hardshell case

**PRICE** \$2,699 (MAP)

**MADE IN** Japan

alvarezguitars.com

# Guild B-240E and Jumbo Junior Basses

Two acoustic bass guitars  
for acoustic guitarists

BY GREG OLWELL

Interview ten bass players and there's a good chance that nine of them will tell you they started playing the instrument because somebody in their band had to. It's often the way things are, and for those guitarists who shift to the low end, it's not a banishment but an opportunity to lay the all-important foundation. If my time with two new Guilds—the B-240E and Jumbo Junior—is any indication, any guitarist would feel comfortable being god(dess) of the groove with these instruments. The company has a long history of producing some of the most desirable acoustic bass guitars out there and that tradition continues with these two basses.

Both instruments will be a natural fit for guitarists, on account of their relatively short scales. The fretboard of the larger B-240E, with its full-size jumbo body, comes in at 30.75 inches—about the length of many classic electric basses, like the Guild Starfire and Gibson EB-3. The Jumbo Junior, on the other hand, has an even shorter scale than most guitars. Its small jumbo body has a 23.75-inch-scale neck—a pairing that puts it in the same category as the Taylor GS Mini-e Bass—and it uses low-tension, nylon-core D'Addario strings to deliver those soothing bass pitches.

The Jumbo Junior's short-scale nylon-core strings have a little bit of the roll under your fretting hand you sometimes get with a classical guitar string, but in the Junior's case, I found that the picking hand took a few minutes of adjustment. Easing up a little on my attack did wonders for the bass' tone, making it bloom and boom more than when I played with the same effort I'm used to on steel-core strings. Also, the Junior really sang when played with a little fretting-hand vibrato.

I love the Junior's look, with its natural finish imbued with a touch of aging toner lending it the appearance of a new-old-stock vintage bass



B-240E

that has aged just a little bit. The bass' mini-jumbo body and short-scale neck make it really comfy for playing in any situation—particularly for noodling at home—though on a strap, it was slightly headstock-heavy.

Any old hot-rodder will tell you that there is no substitute when it comes to cubic inches. That saying is just as true when it comes to body size on acoustic guitars. With its full jumbo body—and arched back, like the Junior's—the B-240E moves a lot of air. It's a large instrument, but I didn't find it bulky or anything less than very

comfortable to play. Plucking with the same intensity that worked well for the Junior delivered pleasingly plump bass notes, but when I dug in just a little harder, the B-240E responded with a punchiness that was forward and confident, but not aggressive. It's right in that sweet-spot of what you could ask an acoustic bass guitar to do—be responsive and present in a mix, but also able to throw down when you need some oomph to blend with a band.

As pleasing as these basses are acoustically, they *really* stepped out when plugged



Jumbo Junior



into a portable Fishman PA. Both instruments share a similar sonic thumbprint of rotund, robust bass goodness, but each has an identity that might appeal to one player over another. The B-240E sounds big, and with the steel-core strings, has a zinginess that would help it be present in a live mix—think of a massive acoustic guitar with seemingly bottomless low end.

The Junior's tone is slightly thuddy—in the best possible way—and leans more toward the upright bass spectrum, which is enhanced by

cutting highs via the onboard Fishman preamp. It also creates a huge thrust in the low-mids, and it's a bit of a mind-bender when you consider the tone coming from this petite powerhouse.

For comfort, looks, and portability, I might give slight favor to the Jumbo Junior, but the B-240E might be your bass if you crave big acoustic tone and a rounder electrified sound for an unplugged-style gig. In either case, with the Jumbo Junior and the B-240E, Guild has two very appealing basses that make going low truly fulfilling.

AC

## JUMBO JUNIOR BASS

**BODY** 14-1/2"-wide jumbo junior body shape; solid Sitka spruce top; laminated flame maple back and sides; scalloped Sitka spruce braces; cream binding; 4.125" body depth; satin polyurethane finish

**NECK** 23-3/4"-scale maple neck; 19-fret ebony fingerboard with 16" radius; 1-5/8"-wide nut; dual-action truss rod; MOP dot inlays; chrome-plated Guild closed gear tuners

**ELECTRONICS** Guild AP-1 active acoustic piezo pickup

**OTHER** Ebony bridge with ivoroid plastic bridge pins; bone nut and saddle; D'Addario EXPPBB190GS coated phosphor-bronze nylon-core strings (.037–.090); padded deluxe gig bag

**PRICE** \$499 (MAP)

**MADE IN** China

## B-240E

**BODY** 17"-wide jumbo body shape; solid Sitka spruce top with scalloped X-bracing; laminated mahogany back and sides; cream ABS binding; tortoiseshell pickguard; satin polyurethane finish

**NECK** 30-3/4"-scale mahogany neck with pau ferro fingerboard; 1-5/8"-wide nut; dual-action truss rod; MOP dot inlays; chrome-plated Guild closed gear tuners

**ELECTRONICS** Guild/Fishman Bass Sonitone

**OTHER** Pau ferro bridge with ivoroid plastic bridge pins; bone nut and saddle; strap pins; D'Addario EXPPBB170 coated phosphor-bronze light-gauge strings (.045–.100); padded deluxe gig bag; B-240EF fretless version also available

**PRICE** \$499 (MAP)

**MADE IN** China

guildguitars.com





# Fishman Matrix Infinity Mic Blend

A popular pickup/preamp, updated for today's guitarists

BY GREG OLWELL

For years, Fishman's endpin-mounted Matrix Infinity acoustic preamp and undersaddle pickup have been an established standard for acoustic guitarists needing an onboard pickup. The company recently updated the system, so we requested the Fishman Matrix Infinity Mic Blend (\$299 MAP), which Fishman sent preinstalled in a recent Martin OM-21. The arrangement features a redesigned preamp with the Acoustic Matrix undersaddle pickup and a blendable cardioid condenser mic. (A version without the mic and blend control, called the Infinity VT, is also available for about \$160.)

Fishman was able to redesign the system to be more capable of working for the wider range of guitar sizes—and styles—players use today. They also redesigned the shape and placement of the soundhole-mounted controls to be

reachable, but out of sight. The small mic inside the soundhole can swivel from pointing toward the back to the strings—I favored a position angled toward the back. A slider switch on the control module selects between two preamp voices—one that yields a neutral response to help control boominess and low-end feedback, and another that provides a subtle boost in bass presence, which gave solo playing a richer, more expansive sound.

I tried the Matrix Blend through several acoustic amps and a portable PA. The soloed undersaddle pickup sounded much like you'd expect, solid and punchy with a dash of classic piezo edginess. Mixing in some mic signal rounded out the tone, giving it a rich body that was rewarding. Speaking of tone, the onboard tone control is useful for subtle sculpting, but



don't expect extremes on the bright or dark spectrum. The new Matrix Infinity Blend didn't have a bad sound anywhere on the control's range.

While the changes may mostly be hidden from players, the results aren't—your ears will tell you that the new Matrix Infinity Mic Blend is the best Matrix Infinity yet. [fishman.com](http://fishman.com)



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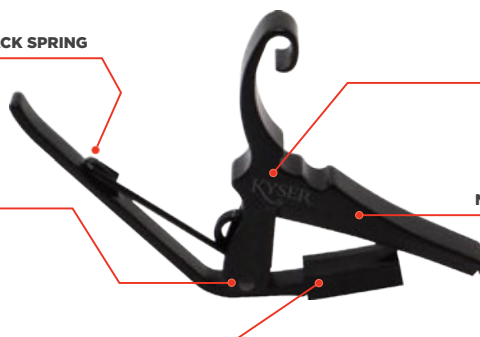
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# Martin Authentic Acoustic Strings

**Martin revises its string lineup with Superior Performance, Marquis Silked, and Lifespan 2.0**

BY GREG OLWELL

After taking a look at its own extensive line of strings, Martin decided to simplify things to make it easier for consumers to shop for the right wires to fit their needs. Three versions of newly redesigned strings are now available under the new Martin Authentic Acoustic brand: Superior Performance (\$6.99), the meat-and-potatoes set; Marquis Silked (\$7.99 street), which adds a special silking at the ball end to protect bridges and their plates from wear and tear; and Lifespan 2.0 (\$12.99), made with a new treatment process for longer-lasting strings. Each set uses features a tin-plated, high tensile strength core wire and is available in 80/20 bronze or 92/8 Phosphor Bronze.

I installed the phosphor bronze versions of all three sets on guitars that seemed appropriate and very familiar to my ears. The Lifespan 2.0 attempts to make the strings sound and look better over the long run. After seven weeks of daily use and numerous tuning changes on a Waterloo WL-S, the Lifespans not only retained the crisp sound of fresh strings, they also still looked new. I heard a much more detailed sound, with extra high-end sparkle and low-mid crunch, than what I'm used to.

The tension, feel, and tone of the SP strings brought a Gibson SJ-200 to life and drew in AG colleagues to compliment the guitar's lively sound. Likewise, the Marquis Silked gave a



Collings D41 dreadnought bountiful tone, with a focus and definition that made this guitar sound better than ever.

There's no knocking Martin's previous array, but the effort to make better strings and simplify the lineup seems to have been a great success. The new Martin Authentic Acoustic strings are worth a try for players into full-bodied tone with rich overtones and harmonics. [martinguitar.com](http://martinguitar.com)



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**Clay Parker  
and Jodi James**  
*The Lonesomest Sound  
That Can Sound*  
(ccjpmusic.com)

## PLAYLIST



TATE TULLIER

## Timeless Americana from Louisiana Duo

**Clay Parker and Jodi James forge a haunting and beautiful sound**

BY BLAIR JACKSON

**T**he Louisiana-based duo of Clay Parker and Jodi James plucked the name of their first full-length album from a line in a semi-obscure Woody Guthrie tune called “When the Curfew Blows”: “Was the lonesomest sound, boys/ that ever heard sound, boys/ like the midnight wind, boys/ when the curfew blows.” Musically, their record doesn’t overtly owe *that* much to Guthrie—though its roots are clearly in rural American folk, country, and blues—but they certainly do understand what that lonesomest sound is all about.

This haunting and darkly beautiful album seems to have drifted in from another, much simpler time, yet its lyric concerns are at once timeless and universal. The graceful intertwining of Parker’s and James’ crystalline guitars and the beautifully mournful blend of their harmonies might bring to mind Gillian Welch and David

Rawlings or Gram Parsons and Emmylou Harris (the latter not a comparison I make lightly), but the duo unquestionably have a distinctive sound of their own that comes through clearly in every song—all of them co-written by the pair, who have been playing together since 2009.

Acoustic guitars drive the tunes—that’s Parker on a 1962 Gibson LG-0 in the left channel, James playing a 1976 Gibson J-45/50 in the right—and a few feature just the graceful symmetry of those two instruments and voices. Both are effective lead singers, but it seems like a perfect soaring harmony is never too far away. The duo also employs a handful of other musicians who lend marvelously subtle and tasteful support at different points, whether it’s Paul Buller’s lovely pedal steel on “Easy, Breeze” and mandolin punctuation on “Katie’s Blues,” or the evocative fiddle and swooping bowed upright bass (by Clyde

Thompson and David Hinson, respectively) on “Cumberland Mill.” The album was recorded in Baton Rouge and Nashville, and mixed by Parker, James, and Chris Finney in Bogalusa, Louisiana—both the production choices and the sonics are first-class all the way.

This isn’t an album that grabs you by the scruff of the neck and demands your attention; rather it gently burrows into your consciousness with its unhurried Bayou pacing, at times dreamy lyrics, and always-persuasive and committed performances. “Up” moments are rare—the song “Yazoo City” qualifies, I suppose—but what they do with the various ballad forms that dominate is truly magical. It takes a particular kind of courage to end an album with a glacial 12-minute folk-blues number (“Killin’ Floor”), but Parker and James not only pull it off, they left me wanting to hear even *more*. **AC**





**Tyler Grant  
& Robin Kessinger**  
*Kanawha County Flatpicking*  
(Grant Central)

#### Flatpickin', singin', and two great guitars

What do you get when you team up two winners of the National Flatpicking Championship at the Walnut Valley Festival, in Winfield, Kansas, with a couple of hot-shot dreadnoughts and 15 bluegrass standards? In the case of Tyler Grant and Robin Kessinger's *Kanawha County Flatpicking*, you get a dazzling display not only of potent wood-and-steel-driven acoustic music, but also good humor.

The opening track, "Soldier's Joy," throws down the gauntlet and makes it clear that Grant and Kessinger at times definitely have a need for speed. But the plaintive, nostalgia-filled "My Blue Ridge Mountain Home" is parlor pickin' at its finest, and affirms that this duo can step away from the bluegrass-as-bloodsport mentality that afflicts so many in the genre. The same can be said for their melodic take on the beautiful "Russian Lullaby" and the sultry "Wednesday Night Waltz."

The Irish-Scottish ballad "Rights of Man" gets a gentle lilt, and the country classic "No Hard Times" is punctuated by yodeling. The jocular chit-chat that intersperses these tracks, laid down at Kessinger's nephew-in-law's Tracksides Studios in West Virginia, adds to the casual feel of these sessions. This duo achieves its stated goal of capturing two fellas pickin' and singin' in a room together. Oh, about those hot-shot guitars: Kessinger plays a Bob Thompson cutaway with a BlueChip pick and DR strings; Grant plays a 1953 Martin D-28 with a BlueChip pick and D'Addario strings. But the real mojo is in their magic fingers.

—Greg Cahill



**Hot Rize**  
*40th Anniversary Bash*  
(Ten in Hand)

#### Triumphant return of legendary bluegrass band

When Hot Rize emerged in 1978, the group was a shot in the arm for the then-burgeoning progressive bluegrass scene. The original lineup featured Tim O'Brien on lead and harmony vocals, mandolin, and fiddle; Pete Wernick on banjo and harmony vocals; Mike Scap on guitar and harmony vocals; and Charles Sawtelle (who died in 1999) on bass, guitar, harmonies, and lead vocals. Over the years, the band went through a couple of guitarists before disbanding in 1990. Flatpicking phenom Bryan Sutton came on board for a short-lived 2002 reunion.

This 40th anniversary celebration, recorded during three sold-out concerts at the Boulder Theatre in Colorado, features Wernick, Forster, O'Brien, and Sutton, as well as special guests mandolinist Sam Bush, dobroist Jerry Douglas, and fiddler Stuart Duncan.

The performance level is, well, stratospheric throughout these 26 tracks. Sutton and Douglas are quite impressive, though Douglas steals the show. The set opens with "Blue Night," a spirited nod to bluegrass pioneer Bill Monroe, and includes several songs that were milestones for Hot Rize's career. In addition to such standards as "Angelina Baker," a tribute to bluegrass mentor Pete Kuykendall ("Out on the Ocean"), and several O'Brien originals, the musicians weave their way through Los Lobos' "Burn It Down" and Glen Campbell's "Wichita Lineman." The result is 68 minutes of bona fide bluegrass—rife with heavenly harmonies and powerhouse picking—from one of the greatest acoustic bands of the modern era. Make room on the mantle for that Grammy!

—GC

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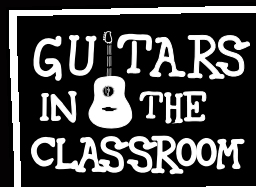
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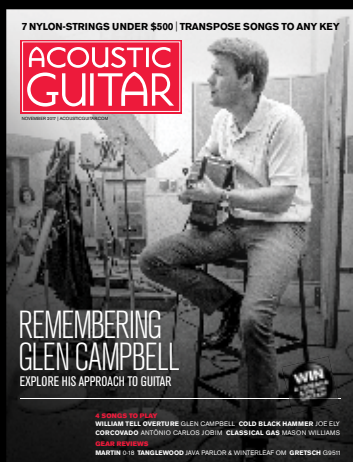
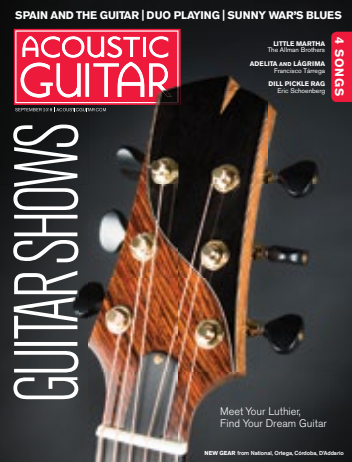
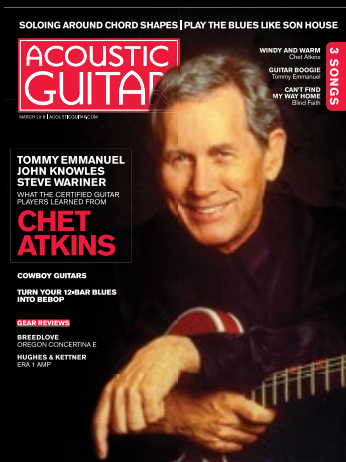


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# 1925 Weissenborn Style 4

**A high-water mark of elegance and tone for acoustic lap-style guitarists**

**BY GREG OLWELL**

**B**efore the advent of electric pedal-steel guitars and mechanically amplified acoustic guitars like the plaintive Dobro and the gleaming National resonator, musicians by the tens of thousands tried their hands at Hawaiian-style playing with acoustic lap-style guitars. Some of these instruments were standard six-strings fitted with taller nuts and saddles to make them easier to play with a bar, but others were specially made for playing this music.

The Weissenborn Style 4 is the high-water mark of the acoustic steel-string guitar for lap-style playing. The 1925 example seen here features an all-koa body and a hollow, square neck that contributes to the guitar's volume and tone. The body, rosette, neck, and headstock are surrounded with rope binding, a spiraling marquetry of alternating pieces of light and dark wood. Instead of frets, which are unnecessary with slide playing, the fingerboard has wooden inlays at the fret positions.

In one of those tales that can only happen in America, the original Weissenborns were made in Los Angeles by a German immigrant who based his design on one by a Norwegian counterpart. Hermann Weissenborn, seen on the label of this instrument, formed his company in 1923 to construct these guitars, closely modeled on Chris Knutsen's "New Hawaiian Family" line. Weissenborn built these distinctive instruments until the shop closed following his death, in January 1937. By then, the electric guitar had taken over and the acoustic lap-steel guitar was obsolete until players such as David Lindley, Bob Brozman, and Ben Harper reintroduced listeners to the joys of these unique instruments.

*To learn more about these makers and their instruments, read Chris J. Knutsen: From Harp Guitars to the New Hawaiian Family by George T. Noe and Daniel L. Most.*



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